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THE NEW ENGLAND
ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

ORGANIZED FEBRUARY 28, 1901

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LEAFLET
NO. 109

SAMUEL THURBER, PH.D.
FORMERLY OF THE GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, BOSTON

JUNE
1918

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE ENGLISH OF HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE PUPILS

For the mental habits and the mental acquisitions which pupils bring to the high school, the high school is of course not directly responsible at all; and I wish to say that the primary and grammar schools are responsible only in part. The part of this responsibility which does belong to the primary and grammar schools I believe is large. First, however, let us see where the rest of this responsibility,—the portion that is not to be laid to the charge of the lower schools,—does rest.

Of all the subjects taught in the schools none is so central to the pupil's nature, none so absolutely and surely indicative of the amount and the kind of his intellectual attainments, of his tastes, his sum of culture, his social position, his inherited or acquired faculty, as his English. Hear a young person speak, or read his letter to you, and you judge at once where he was brought up, but can form no opinion as to where he goes to school. You instinctively reckon his speech as a part of his breeding, not as a part of his knowledge. Gentle manners have their perfect index in the timbre, the modulations, of the voice, in the courteous and correct form of the written note.

For those elements of the juvenile culture which are most basic the school cannot be responsible. The family, the pedigree, the stock, comes first. One's English is really one's attitude towards the world, and one's attitude towards the world is chiefly governed by complaisance; or a desire to please, to make a good impression. A family which has traditions of courtesy and deference makes schooling in English expression superfluous. A family which gives itself to coarse, material ambitions, and knows no higher aim than that vile one of *pushing to the front*, makes schooling vain and futile.

Then consider, too, that besides the social elegance derived from the environment of a refined home, where the note of intercourse is a desire to please, there is the inexpressible advantage of being brought up among books and among people who have read, and ever do read, books; and not only that, but among people whose ancestors read the books of their earlier day, and whose old books still stand on the shelves, precious with associations. A veneration for antiquity is an excellent grace in the character, whatever the old things we venerate. But a veneration for the old literature is a security, perfect and unfailing, against slovenly treatment of one's language. The Bible is ceasing to be read; this we teachers know to our sorrow. But think of the supreme happiness, to a youth, of being brought up in a family where the Bible is read. Is it going to be necessary to find a substitute for the Bible? Can we find such a substitute?

There is, therefore, before the school in time, and also before the school in importance, that vast complex of influences which we ascribe to environment and to inheritance. Some children are in these respects happily circumstanced, and others are not. For these differences the school is not responsible, either for their existence in the first place, or for leveling them afterward, when they are seen and deplored. With regard to children's English, whatever may be the case with the school studies proper, these native and domestic differences are ineradicable; ineradicable, I mean by the school processes. Hence I insist that colleges cannot thrust back upon grammar and primary schools, unqualified responsibility for the condition of young people's English.

What we need to perceive clearly ourselves, about English, and to teach the professors, if they do not know it already, is that English in a school is not an isolated department, against which a separate indictment can be brought. Like a corporation, it has the right of suing, but like a state government, it may not be sued. The English of a school is always as good as the school, as good as the Latin, the arithmetic, the geography; or as good as the average of these. It is absurd to speak of the English in a school as running down in quality, or as being toned up by some specific regimen while the rest of the school goes its way unconcerned. You know it happens sometimes that you are troubled in some peculiarly sensitive organ, as for instance in your eyes: you localize your trouble in your eyes and consult an oculist: but the oculist tells you your eyes are all right,

but your general system has lost something of its proper tone, and you must take measures to improve your circulation; and so, when you expected a prescription of spectacles, you get a prescription of a bicycle. It is impossible to prescribe for atrophied English. Your English is as good as your school, and if your English is unsatisfactory it is because your school is unsatisfactory.

I wish to be understood in this matter. I am not playing with a whimsey, but am trying honestly to set forth a matured conviction, which some of you know I have been expressing for years. Now consider that whatever you teach, you are teaching English. Listen at a school room door, and all you hear is English; teacher's English, pupil's English, all in some tone or other, all betraying the quality of the moral atmosphere within; or it may be you hear Longfellow's or Lowell's verse, or Irving's or Hawthorne's musical prose, delivered in some way or other, all betraying unmistakably the teacher's intelligence,—her power to open young hearts to impressions of the beautiful or the sublime. I care not what particular exercise is on the docket at the moment you listen; you will find it an exercise in this, that, or the other subject; only I ask you to note that it is always an exercise in articulate English, unless indeed you light upon a season of silence, when, if you look in, you will doubtless find it an exercise in written English, or an exercise of some kind in the silent conning of lessons that are in English.

Can this be said of any other study? You know it cannot. English in school is *sui generis*, unlike everything else. If you say, go to, now we will have an English exercise, I should like to ask you when you ever had anything else. You cannot be said to pursue the study of English: the study of English pursues you. What you call an English lesson is no more an English lesson than is your history lesson, and not half so much so as your reading of the Scriptures, your chanting of Longfellow's verse.

The entire moral tone of a school is revealed in its English. Nothing in the school will be better than the English; only the English appeals first and most impressively to casual visitors and spectators. By its English we are to know the school, because the English is the only subject we have the knowledge and the patience to examine. When Professor Goodwin prints hideous translations by students from Latin into English, he ought to be understood as unveiling the secrets of the Latin teaching much more than the shortcomings of the English teaching. And so, by a scholar of

Milton's or Addison's day, he would be understood. But we to-day care nothing about Latin, and know little about any of the subjects taught in the schools, except English. About English we do know: about English we are critical and particular.

The English of a school is a sure index of the school's mood or tone, of its ambition, of the sum and substance of its culture. But do not think I mean we are ever entitled to expect of pupils of any grade precocity in the command of words or in the power to construct sentences with grammatical correctness, or in the ability to say things to which their minds do not reach. The responsibility of primary and grammar schools for the English of the pupils whom they send to the succeeding schools is not at all a responsibility for acquisitions of linguistic knowledge,—unless I except certain very elementary principles of grammar,—but is a distinct and serious responsibility for the possession of good linguistic habits. The teacher must have presided, as a restraining, encouraging, instructing influence, over innumerable acts of speaking, of writing, of reading; so that the pupil shall have formed for himself unconsciously a standard of excellence to which he shall conform without taking thought, and from which he cannot deviate even under some degree of mental perturbation, such as a college examination is sure to inflict.

Thus the question for primary and grammar school teachers is a question of habit-forming procedures. What shall be done, and what shall not be done, to keep up an uninterrupted series of what we may call linguistic acts, performed under conditions that shall stimulate to painstaking and repress slovenliness as an intolerable evil?

And here again I must insist that as English is being used all the time, and there is no exercise that is not an English exercise, every single recitation of every teacher must be regarded as consisting of acts of expression, and no utterance and no writing shall be acceptable that does not observe the proprieties of speech. It is utterly futile for one teacher to be exacting in this regard while the rest are languid or filled with skepticism. For some years now I have preached this doctrine, and have heard from many schools of note that the effort to introduce the principle I have urged has been attended with the happiest results.

Of every school it may be asked, has it a tone, a standard of its own? This means, do all the teachers have the same purpose, and agree as to the main ends that are to be achieved? The force of a harmonious body of teachers is

irresistible. But one person with a carping, censorious idiosyncrasy may plebeianize a whole corps of teachers and make all elevation of tone impossible. Other subjects may have each its own enthusiast: but the school as a whole must bend its energies to the English.

Given, now, an entire corps of teachers with one zeal, it remains to ask what special English exercise will be most useful to aid in the fixing of good habits of speech and to secure some degree of mastery over the most usual English words. Fortunately it has long been the custom to devote certain hours specifically to English exercises. What shall these exercises be?

Since it is the function of speech to express thought or emotion, and the pupil must therefore possess thoughts and emotions if he is to use language, it is obviously the duty of the school to furnish him with thoughts and emotions, or to find these with which nature has supplied him, and which perhaps lie dormant in his soul. But to stimulate thought in the pupil is of course not the function of any special teacher or of any special exercise; rather is it the function of the school itself. Every exercise that succeeds leaves the pupil's mind with a content of some kind, that is, with matter for possible speech; and the more interesting and varied the school exercises, the more abundant the occasions for the pupil to put thought into speech. A youth with a full mind surely needs no full text-book of rhetorical solicitations in order that he may make sentences. Compositions grow like mushrooms when the soil is favorable. Text-book sentences are paper flowers; the stem is a wire, and the whole thing is ghastly.

If the instruction given in a school in the regular branches required by the scheme or course of study does not tend to flower into speech, the reason for this suffocation of nature's conative powers, for this thwarting of nature's desire to make of thought a rounded whole, wherein expression is the complement of perception and increase of knowledge, can be found nowhere else than in the character of the instruction itself. A gain of knowledge implies the immediate power and the desire to speak or write. Hence the English in a school is a perfect thermometer of zeal. An effervescence of topics, a forwardness to record in diary or letter, or even in formal essay, is the note of the active single mind, and no less of the collective mind of the school. Aridity of ideas pressing for utterance is the note, not of the school where English merely is ill taught, but where everything is ill taught. In primary and grammar

schools, where the same teacher teaches English and all the other subjects, the teacher should be fully aware of this peculiar value belonging to the English work, and should aim to fertilize the ground with a view to a good composition crop, not merely because she wants composition matter, but because it is preeminently in so directing her procedures as to secure material for writing, that she will succeed in making her general instruction sound.

Now all I have said thus far leaves untouched the best half of the English teaching. The school studies, as provided in the programme, regard chiefly the intellect. There are opportunities enough, to be sure, in history, geography, and especially in natural science, for reaching the imagination incidentally, and no wise teacher will let these opportunities slip. But the great source of stimulus for the aesthetic faculties, the main reservoir of motives to call the emotions into activity and to give them wholesome direction, must ever be our literature. In her capacity as English teacher, the teacher in primary and grammar school, no less than the specialist in high school or college, has it for her function to bring the children into contact with biography, with stories, and, above all, with poetry.

Here then is a distinctive function for the English teacher as such. Any routinist can give out a lesson from a manual of rhetoric or composition, can hear this lesson recited, and can correct written work. But in presiding over the reading of imaginative prose or verse, the teacher depends on her sympathy, her taste, her readiness to receive impressions and to render them back with appropriate quality and modulation of voice. I have no idea that supervisors and examining boards ever test the histrionic ability of a teacher. The proposition doubtless strikes you as a bit of wayward and facetious humor on my part. But let me tell you in perfect seriousness that it would be far more important to know that a teacher could instantly take the role of Lady Macbeth, of Ophelia, of either Portia, of Rosalind, of Queen Katharine, than it would be to know that she possessed stores of psychology, whether of the obsolete or of the now fashionable sort.

Your responsibility in this matter is a responsibility to investigate and experiment if you have misgivings, and to act boldly in accordance with your convictions, if you have attained convictions. My thesis is that language cannot be taught apart from its meaning, apart from its content, the thing it says; that instruction in language, to be suitable for children, must begin, proceed and end with the interest

that a passage of literature excites by virtue of its beauty or its nobility, by virtue of its power to penetrate the soul, to touch the conscience, to sooth the worries and the discontents of common life. If you think that the practice of reading poetry aloud, with the constant purpose of achieving true artistic expression, and the practice of committing poetry to heart and of giving to dramatic poetry genuine dramatic expression,—if you think that these exercises have but small relation to the teaching of the forms of language, you are most wofully mistaken: and if you think, further, that you can teach the forms of language by means of rule and precept, by iteration of text-book doctrine, couched in dry scientific terms, and illustrated by a medley of phrases that can possibly make no impression, how absurd, how ruinous is your error!

So I say, without reserve,—trust wholly to your reading exercises proper, and to the natural outgrowth of composition, oral or written, which this and other school exercises will yield, for training in the forms of speech. The youth must be trained to a great respect for his mother-tongue: this he cannot be unless he has become indebted to that mother-tongue for elevated pleasure and moral admonition. The way in which he is destined to use his English will depend on a vast complex of associations brought with him from his childhood,—on a mass of habit in the making of which the school has been only one factor. If the school has fairly possessed him during his tender years, if he has felt the civilizing, chastening influence of pure literature, he will hardly, even in the most untoward environment, ever sink into barbarism in his use of language.

I insist therefore, that the first step towards the renovation of our school English,—which the colleges still keep pronouncing extremely bad,—must be the revival of the almost lost art of reading aloud pieces of elevated imaginative literature. The memory should be tasked with little or nothing else than poetic prose or poetic verse. A fund of the best culture is gained when the great passages, that the Saxon race has for generations been wont to chant, are stored away in the memory, there ever to chant themselves throughout the vicissitudes of lives of commonplace toil. No school day should pass without that exercise which we call declamation in the case of the boys, and perhaps, in the case of the girls, recitation; that is, an exercise where the piece is committed to memory, and the speaker has the free use of arms and floor space, and looks his audience in the face. Another exercise, as frequent as possible, should

be writing; and this writing should be conceived as destined to be read, so far as time serves, to the class; and its purpose should be to interest or instruct this little public. The practice of writing solely for the waste basket, a practice I am constantly hearing of as being common in our schools, precisely typifies the dead routinism that tends to settle down on the English instruction.

As I wish to be rightly understood, you will let me recapitulate the main points of my contention. The English of a youth depends on his state of mind, his readiness to take pains, to try to please. I will call it not merely the index of the spiritual tone of the school, but the tone itself, as one's breeding is not merely shown by the tone of his voice, but *is* the tone, the chosen work, the gesture, the facial expression. The great safeguard to the youth as regards his English is a body of pleasing associations connected with his reading, his declamations,—the habit of recurrence to the awakenings and upliftings of soul, for which he was indebted to the English exercises of his school days. Good English is courtesy, it is dignity of character, so established that it cannot be frittered away among the low associations of coarse revelry or the slang of the athletic field. You cannot imagine a Ruskin tracing his command of English to a text-book of exercises. Ruskin was thankful that his mother had required him to learn by heart long passages of Scripture. This is intelligible. Find me a great writer who will confess his indebtedness to a book of rhetoric. Find me a writer on rhetoric who is a great writer, or even a specially clear, forcible or elegant writer. We must do our best to create for our pupils some semblance, though it be but distant and shadowy, of the conditions in which Ruskin learned his English as a child by the side of his mother. This means,—we must, with our English, with the associations of our English in literature and folk-lore, get deeper than we do into the children's souls.

And, finally, I wish to say that I know perfectly well the argument you superintendents will bring to bear against me. I know behind what hedges you are hiding. You put down many a solicitation of reform with your spook of the average teacher. Where are the teachers to be found competent to embody in their practice such ideals,—you will triumphantly ask. Of course such teachers must be developed. But you create no demand for them. Evidently you do not want them. You want only the average teacher, and you do not want your plans to be disturbed. But that the

promise and potency of such teachers exists no one who knows young women, their tastes and their capacities, can for an instant doubt.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The contribution for this issue of the *Leaflet* is an abridgment of an address of the late Samuel Thurber, delivered before the grammar school section of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association at Worcester, November 29, 1895. As our members are to receive a memorial pamphlet on Mr. Thurber, it has been deemed fitting to supplement that material with a reprint of one of Mr. Thurber's own addresses published in *The Journal of Pedagogy*, December, 1895.

In accordance with a motion passed at the spring meeting of our Association, President Gallagher has appointed the following to serve on the Committee on the Training of English Teachers: Charles Swain Thomas, Newton High School; William Allan Neilson, Harvard University; William Orr, Massachusetts State Board of Education; Samuel Foss Holmes, Worcester Academy; E. Charlton Black, Boston University.

This committee has as its task the investigation of such methods of teachers' training as are already in operation, together with the study of such methods as might wisely be introduced into our colleges and normal schools. It hopes to make such recommendations to our New England institutions as will increase the efficiency of our English departments.

RECENT ENGLISH BOOKS

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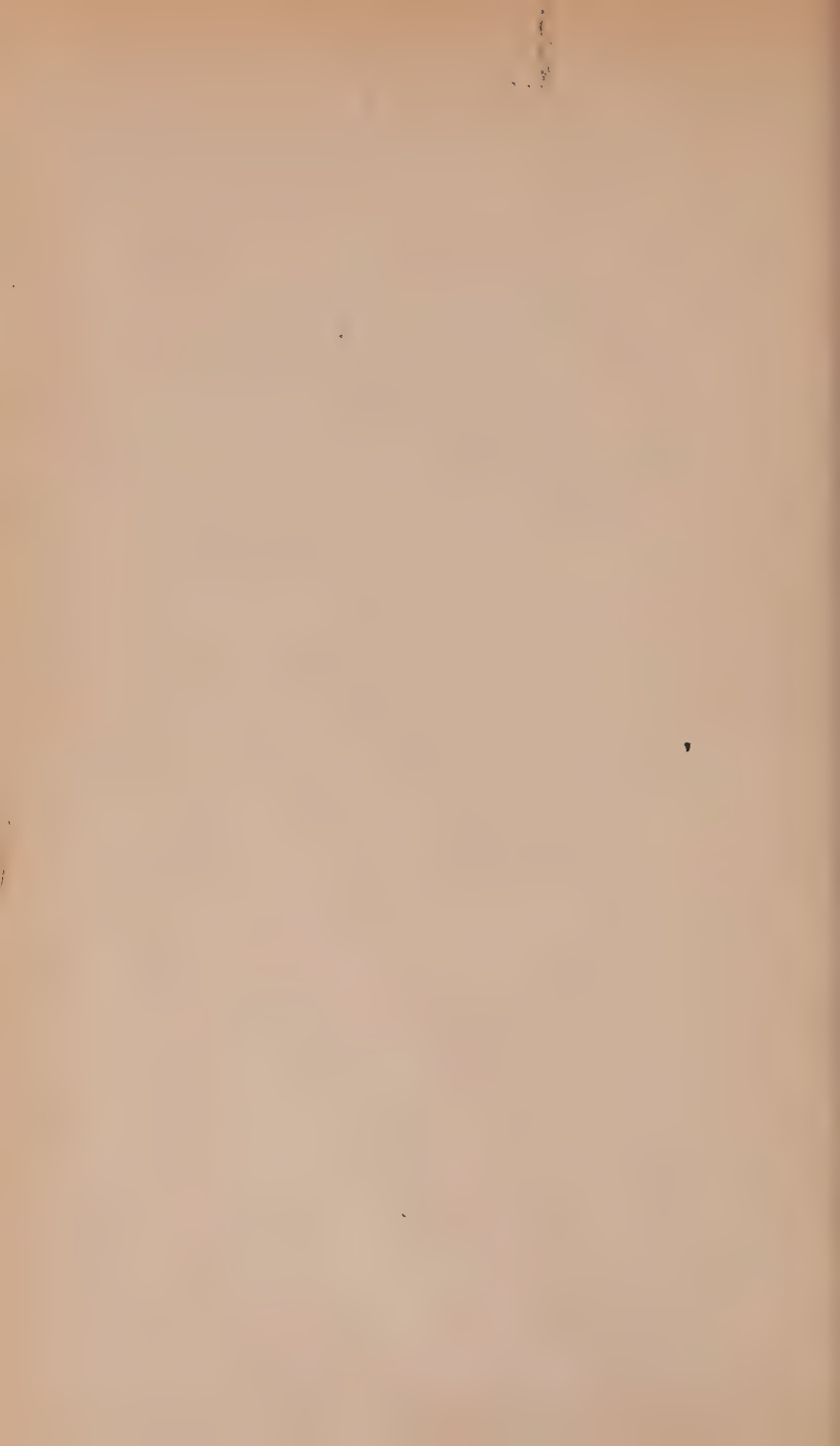
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A
MEMORIAL
OF
SAMUEL THURBER
TEACHER AND SCHOLAR
1837-1913

Erat magister: scholae nihil a se alienum putabat

PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR
THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH



CONTENTS

A Memorial of Samuel Thurber	9
Selections from the Educational Papers and Essays of Samuel Thurber	37
Poetic Truth: being an Essay Read to the Girls of the Girls' High School, Boston, Oct. 26, 1900	57

FOREWORD

This memorial of the late Samuel Thurber has been prepared in recognition of his fifty years of efficient service in the teaching profession. Inasmuch as this service was largely in our own special English field, our New England Association of Teachers of English has gladly accepted the invitation to publish this memorial as one of its serial leaflets. This is all the more fitting because it was Mr. Thurber himself who suggested the idea of making these monthly leaflets an integral part of the work of our Association, and who graciously consented to be one of the first contributors.

Although this memorial Leaflet bears the imprint of our Association, it is being issued through the generosity of Dr. George A. Bacon of the publishing firm of Allyn and Bacon. Dr. Bacon, long a co-worker and a friend of Mr. Thurber's, knows thoroughly the permanent service that Mr. Thurber has performed for the cause of English teaching throughout the United States. His appreciation of that service and his sense of loyal friendship prompt this unique gift. Our appreciation and our loyalty are voiced in our cordial co-operation with Dr. Bacon's design to pay tribute to one who has made our task of teaching English more intelligent and more inspiring.

CHARLES SWAIN THOMAS,
Editor.

SAMUEL THURBER

1837-1913

Samuel Thurber, teacher and scholar, was born in Providence, Rhode Island, April 4, 1837. His mother, who died when the boy was but six years old, seems to have been a woman of singular sweetness of character, devoted to her home and her children. His father, Edmund Thurber, for the greater part of his life was treasurer of the Franklin Foundry and Machine Company, in which his family had been largely interested since its establishment in the early days of the iron-smelting industry. Coming of a long line of Thurbers that first settled in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, in 1671, he inherited the devotion to high ideals and the earnest religious convictions of the pioneers of Rhode Island. He was a man of character and distinction, honest, devout, and highly respected by public-spirited citizens in the community. Among them he passed for a thoughtful reader and a wise counsellor. For many years he served as a member of the Providence School Committee, and in the Abolition Society of his native city he was a leader. With no more formal education than that which he obtained in the elementary schools, he still had acquired a real love of literature. About him he had good books, not many, to be sure, but all chosen with a pure taste for literary style and high moral purpose. "As a boy," his son writes in one of his essays, "I saw on my father's shelves Dryden,

Pope, Addison, Johnson, Boswell, Thompson, Cowper." The home of the foundry treasurer and business man was one of plain living and high thinking, and the books that surrounded his children were the literature of the eighteenth century.

Such an environment was particularly fortunate for a boy who above all things loved to read, for from his earliest childhood Samuel Thurber was a reader and a student. Out-door games and associations with other boys appealed to him but little. His evenings and his Saturdays were spent either at the Providence Athenæum or at home in the family library. The schools which he attended gave him no home-work so that there were many long hours for rummaging and browsing and reading, much as Samuel Johnson rummaged and browsed and read in the quaint Litchfield book-store of his father.

Books, however, were not the only interest of the growing boy. At the Franklin Foundry near his home he spent many Saturday afternoons watching skilled workmen at their work, and for his long vacations he most often went to an uncle's farm in the suburbs of Providence, where he took part in all the activities of country life. These two interests remained with him throughout his life. Next to the schoolroom and the public library, Mr. Thurber enjoyed nothing more than a machine shop or the engine room of a factory. Few even of his most intimate friends knew that he was familiar with all types of machinery, or that he studied and watched the development of the gasolene engine and the turbine with the intelligence and critical insight of a trained mechanic.

Meanwhile the wide and varied reading of these early years was preparing the boy for college. Of this preparation and his entrance examinations Mr. Thurber often spoke with pleasant memories, for in sharp contrast to the modern strenuous procedure of fitting a youth in the secondary schools for the university, his preparation was entirely simple, free from the drudgery of cramming, examinations, and reviews, yet wholesome and perfectly natural. "I entered the Providence High School," he wrote in 1902, "as a pupil in the first half of the nineteenth century. Of any such thing as an examination, I never heard. My grammar school teacher simply sent me to the high school, and, like a good little boy, I went. There were three men teachers, each having charge of a room, who stood in no hierarchical relation toward each other: there was no principal at all. There were two daily sessions, and my father put a share in the Athenæum at my service to occupy my noonings. This was, of course, the heyday time of my young life. The school left to me all my evenings and my Saturdays. In these evenings I began to study German, in those days a rare acquisition. I fitted for college without ever intending it and entered one day when I had never before thought of such a thing. Two or three professors asked me orally a few questions, I signed my name in Dr. Wayland's presence — and I was matriculated."

This was in the summer of 1854 when Mr. Thurber was seventeen years old. He graduated from Brown University with highest honors in the class of 1858. While in college he continued his studies of German and French, largely by himself,

until he was able to read both languages with perfect ease. Moreover, with practically no formal instruction, he now learned to speak both French and German so fluently and with such natural accent that foreigners who talked with him complimented him on many occasions by declaring that he surely must have lived and studied abroad. It was while in college, too, that he came under the spell of Emerson and Carlyle. Of the *French Revolution*, *Sartor Resartus*, and the essays, he never spoke without a glow of enthusiasm; but it was Emerson that became the loadstar of his youth. "We young men sat at his feet in those remote days. Everything that came from Concord we looked upon as oracular, grand, Olympian." In another place he writes, "I came perhaps fortunately before the days of compositions and rhetorics. I read Addison and Cowper and Emerson, and tried to improve my style by theirs."

After graduating from college Mr. Thurber taught for a few months in a grammar school of Providence. A year later, in the fall of 1859, he began his forty-eight years of work in secondary schools by taking a position in the high school of his native city. A year later he married Angeline Sturgis, the oldest daughter of Ira D. Sturgis, a prominent lumber and ice merchant of Augusta, Maine; and then in September, 1862, five months after the birth of his first daughter, he enlisted in the Eleventh Rhode Island Infantry which went almost immediately to join the army guarding Washington. Mr. William A. Mowry, author of "Recollections of a New England Educator," who was Mr. Thurber's college friend and messmate,

has written a few reminiscences of these years in Providence and the army.

"I have known Mr. Thurber since 1855, and have watched his exceptionally honorable career since that time. He was my classmate in Brown University, where he graduated in the class of 1858. I have the impression that he ranked fourth in a class of unusual ability, which graduated thirty-seven members, besides many who dropped out without finishing the course. Three of the class became physicians, four teachers, nine business men, nine clergymen, and eleven lawyers. Among them was the Hon. John Hay, who attained national distinction in public affairs, and many others who might be mentioned as distinguished in the lines they chose.

"Rev. J. H. Gilmore, so long a successful professor in the University of Rochester, and the author of many books and hymns, bore off first honors in our class.

"As we seldom met in recitation, I cannot speak in detail concerning Mr. Thurber's scholarship in college, but he was known as one of the foremost, especially in English literature. Immediately after graduation he began teaching — the ambition of his college days — in the public schools of his native city, and in 1859 he became associated with me in the Providence High School.

"In September, 1862, we both enlisted in the eleventh regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers. I took command of Company K, and he was appointed Second Lieutenant, afterwards First Lieutenant in my company. During the first six months in the field the three commissioned officers of our company really formed a schoolmasters' mess. We were mustered out July 13, 1863.

"Lieutenant Thurber was a thorough soldier, accurate in tactics, faithful in every duty, a strict disciplinarian, and faithfully devoted to the good of the service. The men respected him as a natural leader.

"We teachers of Providence in the early sixties thought of Mr. Thurber as a profound scholar, especially in English and German literature, and as a superior instructor in the ancient languages. He showed in his youth a well-rounded and carefully cultivated mind and a strong character. He studied critically and exhaustively any subject to which he devoted his attention, and hence he had, even as a young man, positive and decided views upon most questions. Above all things, he held in high esteem justice and truth and right."

The position in the Providence high school was waiting for him when he came out of the army, and

here he taught until July, 1865. Then came an eventful episode in his life. A number of Providence business men had organized a company to mine gold which had just been discovered in newly explored regions of Idaho. Among them were relatives of Mr. Thurber who engaged him to accompany an expedition to the gold fields as an assayer. After a few months of preliminary study in the laboratories of the Gorham Silverware Company, he embarked on a sailing vessel for Colon, crossed the isthmus, took passage at Panama for San Francisco, and thence proceeded by mule pack-train to the mountains about Rocky Bar, Idaho. Here he lived the rough, out-door life of a mining camp for a year and a half, and probably would have remained longer had gold been found in sufficient quantity to warrant further operations. Although this voyage to the Pacific coast was one of his most pleasant memories in later life, it was characteristic of the scholar that he spoke most frequently of the opportunities that came to him while in camp of improving his German, and that hardly an hour had passed after reaching home before he was absorbed in the books of his beloved library.

This year and a half in Idaho was the only interruption in Mr. Thurber's fifty years of teaching. Soon after returning to New England he was called to the principalship of the high school in Bangor, Maine. He was now thirty years old, full of enthusiasm and high ambition. His experiences in the West had once for all determined him to make teaching his life work, and he therefore eagerly accepted the position. One of his teachers in Bangor,

Miss Amanda M. Wilson, has written her impressions of Mr. Thurber as she remembers him.

"Samuel Thurber was the principal of our high school here in Bangor in 1867-8, and it was my privilege to be an associate teacher with him during that year. Throughout the long period that has elapsed I have retained most vivid impressions of the man and of his work, though I have seen him but seldom.

"Coming here in his early manhood his work was characterized by an ardent love for his profession, and an earnestness and an enthusiasm which impressed teachers and pupils alike. He was a man of excellent judgment, of rare ability as a student, of keen powers of discrimination; and these qualities, enriched by broad culture, gave us, even in 1868, abundant promise of the place that in later years he was destined to take in the front rank of eminent educators.

"The principalship in Bangor was conspicuously successful, and it was a matter of universal regret in the city that it was so brief. He always retained very happy memories of his life in Bangor; in fact, not many months before his death he wrote a long letter of friendly reminiscence, referring appreciatively to his assistants in those far away days. As the only surviving member of that faculty, I gladly offer this tribute to the memory of one who was an example and an inspiration to pupils and fellow-teachers."

The year in Bangor was followed by a few months in St. Louis, where Mr. Thurber went with some misgivings to accept the head-mastership of a disordered, poorly equipped high school. The experience in St. Louis was the only one which he looked back upon with dissatisfaction in his long career. So distasteful to him was the work that he left in January, 1870, and returned to New England to organize the first high school for the town of Hyde Park in the suburbs of Boston. Here he was happy and eminently successful. The field was a new one; the interest and enthusiasm of the townspeople were a helpful incentive; the pupils were earnest and appreciative. About him he collected a strong faculty, and in two years he had

put the new institution on a firm basis. It is worthy of note that here, as in every high school where he served as principal, he never was too busy to teach at least one class, and usually two, each year. What is most interesting, he had in these early days no one subject that he preferred above another. As he often said, he had taught everything on the program from Greek and Latin to astronomy and civics. Probably nothing gave both teachers and pupils greater confidence in Mr. Thurber as a leader than the very fact that he could step into any room of his building and take the class as he found it, teaching the subject in hand with so much skill and sympathy that instructor and students were inspired to greater zeal. It was while living in Hyde Park, moreover, that he made fast friendships among the Boston schoolmasters, friendships that eventually brought him to the Girls' High School where he taught for the last twenty-five years of his life.

In September, 1872, Mr. Thurber went to Syracuse, New York, to be principal of the high school. In many ways the six years that followed were the most exhilarating of his career. The people of Syracuse were most hospitable; his family was entertained in the most cultivated homes of the city; his health was improved; his spirits were high; the problems of the new situation were stimulating. Here, as in Hyde Park, he took long Saturday walks and vacation rambles, exploring with congenial companions the interesting geological formations of the neighboring country. About him he gathered a group of teachers of unusual ability,—teachers whose single ambition seemed to be harmonious

and earnest co-operation with their master. One of the members of that faculty, later principal of the school, was Dr. George A. Bacon who became Mr. Thurber's closest friend. Their friendship continued unbroken for thirty-five years. Probably more truly than any one else Dr. Bacon understood and loved Mr. Thurber; and therefore no one can speak more sympathetically of those Syracuse years than he. Dr. Bacon says:

"My first sight of Mr. Thurber was one June morning in 1874 in the old Syracuse High School, then quite new. It was one of the show buildings of the state at that time, and he had in charge a distinguished looking foreigner with whom he was speaking fluent French. Later the conversation changed to equally fluent German. Mr. Thurber had never been abroad, but it was characteristic of his thoroughness and versatility that he spoke with perfect readiness, and with a wide range of vocabulary, both French and German, which he had mastered without ever living in a community where either was spoken.

"Our more intimate acquaintance began the following September. Mr. Thurber was at that time thirty-seven years old. The Board of Education, which two years before had appointed him principal of the high school, surrounded him with teachers of his choice. The school was large enough to furnish scope for his ideas and not too large to respond to his personal influence. His vitality was unimpaired, his body alert, and his intellectual activity marvelous. In later years he often said the time spent in Syracuse was the happiest of his life.

"It is not easy for me to speak with moderation of those years when I saw him daily, because from him I received a stimulus such as never came to me from any man or group of men before or since. He knew things and he saw things of which I had never dreamed, and he made me see them. This, I take it, is the highest function of a teacher or a leader, and those three years of intimate association with him day by day, were the beginning of a new intellectual life.

"His attainments were extraordinary, but held in reserve to such an extent that no one knew them all and few knew them except in some single direction. When Stanley Hall's *Bibliography of Education* appeared in 1886, Mr. Thurber wrote an unsigned review of it for *The Academy*. A few days

after it appeared, I received a note from Mr. Hall asking for Mr. Thurber's address, and remarking that only one man in the country could have written that review. Mr. Hall knew of Mr. Thurber's studies in English, French, German and Italian educational literature, just as some other men knew his Dante studies, as others knew his original work with the Greek dramatists, or still others his profound and far reaching studies in French history. He never paraded his attainments; one found them out for oneself, but they were always unreservedly at the disposal of any one whom they could serve. He was never satisfied till he had gone as far as he could with any subject that interested him, and then his interest in that particular study ceased. The exact and definite residuum of knowledge he retained, but the apparatus by means of which he obtained it he was ready to discard.

"He never talked of himself, never posed or sought position, applause, or influence. He was a slave to moods over which he had little control, but which a congenial companion could usually dispel if possessed of patience enough to withstand certain little repulses that came from the nerves rather than from the heart. His capacity for unwavering friendship was known to few, and because I was one of the few I am venturing to write this tribute. Since his death I have read over some three hundred treasured letters received from him since 1878. They range from a brief half-page note, giving a single bit of news or change in plans, to long accounts of his reading or his work. In literary form, as well as in content, they are uniformly happy. They vary, too, all the way from rollicking fun—a side of him which few knew—to serious and affectionate sympathy in affliction.

"His wonderful command of words sometimes served him ill in moments of irritation or petulance, when he would let fly 'winged words' that could penetrate the thickest skin. Many of us who think worse things than ever entered his head, are saved from serious harm by our inability to find fitting words to express what we feel. He was usually unconscious of the penetrating quality of his reproofs, but if frankly told of the pain he had inflicted, words of regret would come as touching and appropriate as those that had given offense, and these last were always serious and heartfelt, never hasty and ill considered as the former too often were.

"As a teacher he had worlds of patience with the earnest pupil, no matter how slow or how hard of understanding. To those who came to him for help, whether pupils or associates, he gave freely the best he had. The real learner found always a patient and sympathetic hearing, but the tyro who posed as an expert could count on discouraging silence or biting criticism.

“With advancing years and diminishing bodily strength, his circle of interests narrowed. His mind was as keen as ever, but less alert, and his thoughts ran ever in deepening channels from which he rarely looked out on the world around him. To the very last he read and studied with the absorbing attention of his best years. By habit and natural aptitude a student and literary worker, he had also had his share in outside experiences, and until after middle life he was keenly interested in the affairs of the world. He served in the army during the Civil War and spent some time on the Pacific slope before the era of transcontinental railroads. All this helped to make him the man he was, but he was by temperament self-effacing and so was easily overlooked. I cannot but feel, however, that to many others, as to me, he has been an inspiration and a help beyond any power of words to express.”

Dr. Bacon's estimate of Mr. Thurber's character and scholarship is sympathetic and sound. What he says of his letters is particularly true. Mr. Thurber never used a typewriter or a telephone, and but seldom a post-card. He gave his best time, usually his early evenings, to his correspondence. His letters were always vigorous and racy, full of delightful comment upon his reading, piquant, humorous, and at times keenly satirical. The best of them have the flavor of literary gossip of Fitzgerald and the wit of Lowell. Their very form, with their black India ink and neat, full, handwriting, with rarely a word blotted, expressed his character. The fact that Dr. Bacon is only one of many friends who always preserved his letters speaks well for their originality and charm.

Another teacher of the Syracuse High School whom he greatly respected was Miss Mary Rhoades. Her unbroken acquaintance with many of those who were pupils of Mr. Thurber in 1875 gives to her words special significance:

"For five years I had the privilege of being under Samuel Thurber in the Syracuse High School. As I recall now his strong influence over his assistants, I think it was largely due to the extent and exactness of his knowledge. This, with his quick sympathy and sound judgment, gave him an intelligent interest in the work of each one of us. Though he habitually encouraged our independence, he was ever ready to offer a suggestion or give a word of commendation or warning.

"We were all impressed by his high conception of the life of a teacher, by his own absolute devotion to his profession, and even by the very words he used,—for his speech was invariably that of the man of culture. No wonder, then, that we worked under him in harmony and with great enthusiasm.

"It is interesting to see him from his former pupils' standpoint. Dr. Nathan Jacobson says: 'Of all the teachers I have ever known, Samuel Thurber stands out in boldest relief. He impressed me by his earnestness, his thoroughness, his general knowledge of many subjects. He seemed at home in every class-room of our school. Forty years have not dimmed my affection for him.'

"Mr. Clarence E. Wolcott speaks with special gratitude of Mr. Thurber's once having had him commit some lines beginning,

'Still may a veteran few have pride
In thoughts whose sternness makes them sweet,
In fixed resolve by reason justified.'

"These lines, Mr. Wolcott says, have been the source of great helpfulness to him and to others to whom he has passed them along. He also says of Mr. Thurber: 'To walk with him meant a fuller knowledge of life and a better conception of the real things of this world. For forty years he has been an inspiration to me and to many others who have not seen him during this long period.'

"Such words from the pupils of so many years ago attest the fine qualities of the man and the best success of the teacher."

It was with keen regret that Mr. Thurber at length felt obliged to leave Syracuse to take a position in a larger and more remunerative field at Worcester, Massachusetts. Here there was at that time but one high school, of which he became the principal in September, 1878. Administrative duties

were now more exacting, and consequently opportunities for class-room teaching hardly possible, a condition which alone accounts for his never enjoying the Worcester days with quite the warmth that he had anticipated. Yet all who were associated with him felt his enthusiasm and the force of his personality. Mr. E. H. Russell, then principal of the State Normal School at Worcester, writes of him:

“My acquaintance with Mr. Thurber, while always frank and friendly, was hardly intimate. We lived as neighbors during the years of his residence in Worcester, and were in a social and professional sympathy that was never interrupted.

“While I sometimes thought that I perceived in him traits (perhaps they were no more than tastes, or even passing moods) that were somewhat contradictory, yet, so far as I could discern, there was no uncertainty as to the bent and determination of his mind upon good literature. He seemed to dwell habitually in a literary climate and to feel at home in no other. It is perhaps the rarity of this endowment in teachers that made Mr. Thurber’s work in the schoolroom invaluable. Wide knowledge, clear judgment, and refined taste, these, in combination with a restrained enthusiasm, enabled him to bring into his classes an influence which fell upon many an opening mind like inspiration.

“I have been a visitor in his class when mastery of the subject and skill in presenting it to youthful minds united to produce a type of teaching which for effectiveness and artistic quality I have never seen surpassed and rarely, if ever, equaled.

“Mr. Thurber’s scholarship seemed to me an unusual ‘blend’ of the picturesque and the practical. His teaching seldom if ever went wild or fell into wasteful soliloquy; with all its variety and richness, both of substance and form, it failed not to keep the pupil in full view.”

One of Mr. Thurber’s pupils in her senior year of the Worcester High School was Miss Minna Rawson, who became Mrs. Henry C. Mulligan, and later the President of the Massachusetts Federation of Women’s Clubs. Mrs. Mulligan says:

"No person ever exerted a stronger influence upon my intellectual life than Samuel Thurber. He inspired me with a desire to read and study. So deeply did I value his good opinion that I eagerly seized every suggestion and acted upon it. As a result I read during the year a great deal of classic literature such as *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and Cowper's *Task*. If I could anticipate an author so as to say I had read certain books or poems the look of pleased approval in Mr. Thurber's eyes more than repaid me for the hours I spent painstakingly going over the words of some half-understood piece of literature.

"His interest in his pupils extended beyond the classroom, and often he invited them to his home.

"At the time of my graduation, Mr. Thurber talked to me about my future and made several suggestions which have been of great value to me. He knew that I planned to go at once to teaching and he urged me as an excellent preparation for a primary school teacher to read and re-read Wordsworth, saying that if I acquired an appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry I would have developed in myself certain characteristics which would better fit me to be a teacher of little children than anything a normal school course might give me. He advised me to read at least one play of Shakespeare every year, saying that I would gain as much culture from a thorough mastery of one play as from a year's schooling. He urged me also to keep up my French by reading one French book a year. Above all, he urged me to keep steadily before me the attainment of my desire for a college education.

"I have told of his influence upon my life. From personal knowledge I know that his influence has been equally great upon the lives of others."

In December of 1880, through the influence of Dr. William C. Collar, then a member of the Boston School Committee, Mr. Thurber was invited to come to the Girls' High School in West Newton Street. The examinations, which every candidate for a position in Boston was required to take, were set aside, his reputation as teacher and scholar excusing him from formal and superficial tests. With the exception of four years, 1883-1887, when he was principal of Milton Academy, he remained in the Girls' High School until he retired from active work

in 1909,—a period that lacked but a few months of twenty-five years.

Soon after coming to Boston his work began to be more and more in English, until it came to pass that he taught nothing else, though his studies in history and the classics, in German, French, and Italian went on ever to wider fields. The tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides he translated and annotated on interleavings in his much worn copies. Dante and Goethe he often declared that he had been through every five years since he knew their languages. He read extensively in pedagogy, collecting little by little probably as complete a private library of the subject as existed in 1897. This collection he then gave to Brown University. With Beowulf and Chaucer he spent many evenings after his compositions for the next day had been corrected. Just before his retirement he read in French everything he could find that pertained to Napoleon. Of this wide range of scholarly interests, and of his pleasant associations with the "Friday Club," Dr. D. O. S. Lowell, head-master of the Roxbury Latin School, has written a few paragraphs:

"Samuel Thurber represented a type of teacher that is growing rarer each day,—the scholar among schoolmasters. We have specialists now, but Mr. Thurber was a master of many arts. During his long life he taught every subject in the curriculum, and taught each subject well.

"*Erat magister: scholae nihil a se alienum putabat.* Yet he had a specialty also,—English, to the teaching of which, during the last twenty years of his school life, he devoted himself exclusively.

"It was a joy to listen to one of his English recitations. He aroused and inspired even the most listless pupil. For him, the girls were ever ready to do all he asked, and more.

"He was a member of the 'Friday Club' of Boston, a select body of congenial educators, wherein each member in turn presents a paper on some topic outside the pale of his profession. Mr. Thurber's papers always evoked great interest. They were original, forceful, and entertaining; and though they might not be *about* English, they were sure to be *in* English, and that of the best sort.

"For twenty years Mr. Thurber has been one of the most potent influences in New England for the betterment of English teaching. Until recently he was a regular attendant upon the meetings of the New England Association of Teachers of English, and usually took part in the deliberations. In a contest of wit he wielded a trenchant blade, yet even his opponents enjoyed his pregnant criticism and keen sarcasm, though they might wince beneath them.

"He edited several English classics, in which his notes and introductions will always be found serviceable to English teachers, both in point of style and because of their helpful suggestions."

Dr. Lowell is right in saying that Mr. Thurber's chief delight, after 1890, lay in the teaching of English; for in no subject that he had taught before could he make such good use of his vast reading, and in no other subject, as he often declared, had he ever found so many opportunities for moral instruction. "Literature," he once wrote, "especially in its highest form — poetry — is the handmaid of religion; the teacher of poetry can reach, as can no one else, the deepest and most sacred things in the souls of youth." And again — "The teacher of English has at once the most laborious and the most delightful of all the provinces of school work. Fortunately for him there is no goal at which he can stop; he must always advance, and he has room to advance. He must constantly reinvigorate his mind with new acquisitions, for only on condition that he keep himself perpetually bright and interesting can he hope to stimulate the moral being of boys and girls." Although he professed

to scorn methods, calling himself "an opportunist," he held with unwavering faith, to the very end of his life, certain theories and principles of English teaching, theories and principles which he carried out in his daily work. These he now began to expound in vigorous essays in educational magazines, notably *The Academy*, *The School Review*, and the *Journal of Pedagogy*. His papers read at teachers' conventions were distinguished for their clear, original style, their epigrammatic force, and their delicious satire. It is safe to say that between 1890 and 1902 no one said or wrote more on the subject of English that was thoroughly stimulating to teachers far and wide than Samuel Thurber.

The natural result of this writing and lecturing was visitors. To hear his classes and to talk with him they came singly and in groups from Maine to the Mississippi and beyond. Room 10 in the Girls' High School, Miss Richardson says, "became a sort of Mecca for those who would learn how to guide the footsteps of the young people of today in things literary." At certain times in the year hardly a day passed without callers. To them all he was unfailingly courteous and helpful, often giving them time that he could ill spare from his recess and luncheon hour. From the point of view of one these of visitors, Mr. Alfred N. Hitchcock of the Hartford Public High School has written his impressions of Mr. Thurber in 1895.

"It was not my good fortune to know Mr. Thurber intimately. We met but once, years ago, and were together possibly two hours, part of the time in classroom, part of the time in his private office where he talked with me in a most kindly manner about matters that were troubling me, a young teacher seeking advice. No doubt I passed from his memory

completely in a few days, forgotten like many another visitor; yet for fifteen years I have cherished memories of him, for I came away feeling that I had been with a master.

"I have been trying to think what it was that made him a master. Was it his fine scholarship? In some measure, no doubt; yet it was scholarship humanized, I suspect, by a passionate love for good literature. Was it some carefully evolved method of instruction? On the contrary, I cannot think of him without wondering if we should not all do better if we could once more meet our pupils face to face in simple, familiar manner, largely free from method and system and textbook restraint. Was his success due to some rare, magnetic trait of character? I think it was, and that rare, magnetic quality was sympathy.

"The old order changeth. We are facing new problems. But human nature remains unchanged; the fundamentals of good teaching remain the same. Scholarship sweetened with a passionate love for good literature; plain simplicity as opposed to elaborate method; above all, sympathy: these remain the great essentials. That they were the great essential, I think I learned during that brief, long ago interview with Mr. Thurber."

In 1891 an unexpected and unsought honor was bestowed upon him. "In recognition of the critical research and special attainments evinced in his various publications, especially his *Vocabulary to the First Six Books of the Iliad*," he was given the degree of Ph.D. by Brown University, his Alma Mater. For degrees and titles he had but little concern. As it was characteristic of the man that he seldom spoke of his services in the Civil War, never formally joined the Grand Army, and never asked for the pension to which he was entitled; so it is easy to understand that he never wrote his honorary degree after his name. Indeed he greatly preferred to be called simply *Mr. Thurber*. Those who knew him best never imputed this idiosyncrasy to affectation or assumed humility, but rather to a genuine simplicity of character and a distaste for anything that seemed liked ostentation.

As he grew older Mr. Thurber often congratulated himself upon the change from the principal's office to the class-room which he made when he came to Boston. This feeling was partly due to his growing aversion for executive details and for management of business affairs. It was due more, however, to his devotion to the teaching of literature and to close sympathy with his pupils. His happiest hours in Syracuse and Worcester had been before a class: now that he taught English to alert and appreciative girls he felt even more keenly the influence upon others of his own personality. Miss Elizabeth Richardson, who was a pupil of his at this time, and later a colleague in the faculty of the Girls' High School, writes of him:

"Mr. Thurber's was the sort of unique personality that lends distinction to a school. He brought to his work, moreover, a mind stored with the lore of many tongues and many centuries. Hundreds of girls who have studied literature under him have been stimulated to appreciation and to research on their own account.

"One of his most delightful essays upon literature, which he called an essay upon Poetic Truth, has never been printed.* It was written especially for our girls, and is kept in our library in type-written form. I have often read it of recent years to my classes, and it never fails to awaken delightful appreciation.

"Mr. Thurber was, doubtless, somewhat of an extremist in certain views: his hostility to system and to examinations was, perhaps, at times too severe; but we shall do well in this much be-noted and examined age to listen to the voice that bids us stand for liberty and for stimulation of interest, trusting the growth of culture to the soil on which falls the good seed that we scatter with liberal hand."

The power, which Mr. Thurber possessed to an unusual degree, of stirring and awakening his pupils to a love of literature came not so much from methods or theories of teaching as from the per-

* See page 57 of this Memorial.

sonality of the teacher, above all from his quick sympathy and perennial interest in his individual students. We have unfortunately come to think of one who is preëminently a scholar as unfitted to teach in secondary schools; for we probably have found eminent scholarship too frequently accompanied by interest in books and books alone. But Mr. Thurber was never a dry-as-dust student, never a book-worm. Though seldom in good health during his last years, he still had to the very end of his life a generous, heart-felt interest in young people. Human nature was always more to him than the printed page. He insisted that his pupils write compositions about themselves. His favorite topic to assign was an autobiography,—not of a piece of chalk or a five-cent piece,—but of the girl writing the theme. He wanted to know about the lives of those before him; he urged them to be, and succeeded in making them, frank, sincere, and natural. Affected, bookish, learned girls he would not tolerate. He never failed to speak in his home of the girls whom he had met that day, who, though graduates of several years, had stopped him for a chat. With many of them he kept up an intermittent correspondence. Perhaps no little incident ever gave him greater pleasure than a letter written by a young Italian woman, telling him of her delight in reading a public library copy of Amicis' *Cuore* which bore his name on the cover as the donor.

Whether he gave his books to the Boston Public Library, or edited English classics for schools, or studied in the literature of all ages and all peoples, he felt that he was studying primarily for his pupils, striving to improve himself that he might give them

more. He once wrote to his friend, Mr. George H. Browne, "When a pupil asks guidance and suggestion I want for his sake to give good guidance and plentiful ideas. I must already have gathered and must still be gathering. And my ideas must be original; or, if not original, must be fully assimilated. This means, I must be a tireless student." That he gave not only plentiful ideas, but inspiration, lofty ambition, and an outlook on the finer things of life, the words of Mrs. Inez Haynes Gillmore, a pupil in his classes at the Girls' High School, bear testimony:

"After nearly a quarter of a century, I can recall with absolute definiteness three courses in English literature that I took under Mr. Samuel Thurber of the Girls' High School in Boston. This is because Mr. Thurber was a great teacher. Most of the recitation hour in his courses was given over to the reading of whatever author we happened to be studying, to the elucidation of obscure passages, and to the discussion of obscure allusions. That is the method employed by all teachers of English literature in secondary schools. In many cases, it is a monotonous and unillumined proceeding. With Mr. Thurber as guide, this system became breathlessly interesting. There developed in us a great mental curiosity; we had a sense of thrill as of actual embarkation on an unknown sea, as of personal discovery and exploration. Part of the recitation hour was given over to the reading of original compositions and to Mr. Thurber's comments on them. This, again, is the method employed by all teachers of English composition in secondary schools. The majority of young people dread composition more than any other work of High School. Mr. Thurber's insistence on simplicity and sincerity in writing was so strong, his interest in our individualities so great, his delight in unexpected originality so keen that we welcomed the task of composition. Part way through our High School course, Mr. Thurber decided that he would establish the custom of having a report of the previous lesson read at each recitation. The duty of writing this report fell in rotation on the members of the class. It was always an addition to the work of the day. Yet, somehow under Mr. Thurber's tutelage, the writing of a report that was both accurate and

concise became not a burden but a pastime,—a pastime as exciting as the working out of a puzzle.

“As I analyze these methods for the wonderful qualities that lay back of them, they crowd on me almost too fast for enumeration. Mr. Thurber had an alert, active, sensitive mind, perfectly trained and controlled. He had a personality full of interest, originality, and charm. He had a delightful sense of humor, a delicious wit, a playful and whimsical fancy. He had a fine understanding of human values. He had a keen sympathy with youth, its dreams, and ambitions. His taste in literature was singularly pure; he had a real scorn of the cheap, the meretricious, the impermanent. And yet when I try to fix on the one quality that informed all this quantity, it boils down to enthusiasm. That enthusiasm was not a quality indeed; it was a special gift, a genius. Because of it, the study of literature had for him all the pull of the vocation and all the fascination of the avocation. It kept him constantly reading, constantly thinking, constantly experimenting, that his pupils like those of Arnold of Rugby might ‘drink from a living stream.’ It sent him during his middle years, in the course of a first trip to England, on a devout pilgrimage from one literary shrine to another. No one thing better illustrates this enthusiasm, it may be said in passing, than the fact that when the present writer asked for a brief account of this trip, he answered within two days with a twenty-two page letter written in a beautiful, clear, long hand describing it to the last detail.

“That enthusiasm spread to everything that it touched. It was not only both infectious and contagious, the results were incurable. For us, it illuminated the dictionary, electrified the encyclopædia, humanized biography; and whatever the period we happened to be studying, it sent us scurrying through the field of contemporary literature on all kinds of enchanting, individual explorations. Under its glamor, facts took on the color of fiction, prose assumed the iridescence of poetry, poetry became magic itself. That enthusiasm pulled his pupils out of the futile fiction-reading of the young-girl period. It sent them racing to the public libraries to drink, in their leisure, from a stream of literature that could not be defiled. It sent at least one of them to college that she might take a longer and deeper draught. His enthusiasm buoyed her up all through her university experience; it lingers with her yet. Certain names, Chaucer, Shakespere, Milton — particularly Milton — Pope, Swift, Addison — particularly Addison — Goldsmith, Boswell, Johnson — particularly Johnson — diffuse a double lustre; for they shine not only with their own glory but with Samuel Thurber’s enthusiasm. She looks back on those hours of his guidance as on another life. It

seems to her that the dry-as-dust textbooks turned under the spell of his enthusiasm to

‘Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam,
Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn.’”

Although he had the ability, of which Mrs. Gillmore speaks, to arouse even the dullest members of a class, Mr. Thurber always believed that his most effective work had been done with the more brilliant pupils. With them he took infinite pains and infinite time to be of service. “I have little patience,” he once wrote, “with the teaching that in its desire to help the weak, neglects to satisfy the vigorous, the alert, and the ambitious.” This attitude probably accounts for the large number of his scholars in whom he kindled a yearning for college. It may also explain the durable satisfactions which he himself gained for forty years from his work.

Those who knew him best often expressed amazement at the amount of reading he did in addition to his regular teaching. But it must be remembered that, though he took keen delight in conversation with a few intimate friends, he was not fond of mixed society; in the latter part of his life he seldom went out evenings; games, with the possible exception of chess, he did not care for; he spent his vacations usually at home. Furthermore, he read German and French without dictionaries, almost as rapidly as he read English, and his eyes gave him no trouble; indeed, he read for hours at a time lying on a couch in his study, apparently with no ill effects.

The broad scope of his attainments, however, chiefly came from his remarkable regularity and

orderliness, his power of concentration, and his promptness in getting at things. Until the day of his death he never rose later than six o'clock. For years he left his home for school almost at the same minute. His calls at the public library, at Small's or at Schoenhoff's were so methodical that one of his friends once declared that on any week day after three o'clock he knew just where he could find Samuel Thurber. With children playing on the floor about his chair he translated *Æschylus*; from the *Divine Comedy* he would turn a dozen times in an evening to give a word of suggestion or help to his son, who, on the other side of his table, noisily studied Latin, Algebra, and German. His promptness is well illustrated by the fact that he never kept compositions at home more than one night. School work never accumulated on his desk. It was one of his pet theories that no teacher should assign more written work than he could comfortably correct in half of an ordinary evening. This theory, like all his educational beliefs, was so faithfully put into practice that his pupils for twenty years invariably received their themes at the next English recitation after they handed them in.

This well ordered plan of living gave him many hours in his library, which little by little grew to a collection of more than three thousand volumes. For first editions and rare bindings he did not care. His books were purchased first of all to be read. As a result, his library was a working library, of comparatively little pecuniary value, but of great practical service to the student of English and German literature.

In spite of poor health and gradual withdrawal

from public activity, Mr. Thurber's interest in the world's progress never flagged. Every day he read the morning *Herald* and the evening *Transcript*. He kept in close touch with school developments of every sort. Particularly strong was his sympathy with technical and vocational education; for as far back as 1894, when he was one of the most influential advocates of the elective system, he had spoken of the public high school as the people's college, in which every student should find something to satisfy his needs in after life. As late as 1911 he wrote in a letter, "A high school system must be flexible enough to adapt its course of study and its methods of instruction to every boy and girl of the community." By his vigorous talks with his few intimate friends he showed to the very end that in things educational he was not merely abreast of the times, but rather ahead of the times, as he had been all his life.

Perhaps no one knew Mr. Thurber more intimately in these last years than Mr. George H. Browne of the Browne and Nicholls School in Cambridge. Mr. Browne writes:

"With the passing of the second story front of Willard Small's Franklin Street book-shop, passed one of the favorite haunts of our lamented teaching book lover; and with the passing of Samuel Thurber, passed almost the last of our teaching scholars. I was going to say 'old-fashioned scholars,' but that would seem to imply that he wasn't so young and up-to-date as some of the rest of us,—and that would not be true. It could never be said of him, as he said of his old teacher, the grammarian Greene, 'he was notably a school-master first and a student only at many removes from that.' Samuel Thurber was scholar first and last,—a student seeking more light, up to the very end. It is a satisfaction to us, who missed him at Willard's as we might have missed Addison at Will's, to know that his revel with his beloved books in

his well-earned retirement, though short, was not clouded as Milton's was, and as Mr. Collar's is, light denied.

"Before I knew Mr. Thurber more intimately in our New England English Association, I had long known him as the most independent, suggestive, and radical contributor to the proceedings of our teachers' conferences and to educational periodicals; and I was familiar—as who was not—with his distinctive style, as felicitous, epigrammatic, and individual as his ideas were original and his ideals consistently high.

"No one took a keener interest or a more active part in the formation of the New England Association of Teachers of English than Mr. Thurber. He modestly declined the presidency; but he served faithfully on the early executive committees; and the young organization so auspiciously begun, developed into the most efficient of all the associations of the kind largely by reason of his sage counsel, wide experience, and practical good sense. One of the most important elements that have contributed to the Association's efficiency was due entirely to his initiative. To the unbroken series of these monthly leaflets he contributed the brightest numbers: *Our Grievs and Discontents* (No. 2), *A Desultory Screech on Composition Topics* (No. 34), and he gave a most stimulating address on *The English Situation* at the November meeting in 1902. It was amazing how every discussion, no matter what the topic, gave him a fresh opportunity for a brief, stirring exposition of some of his pet theories,—theories, however, which he put into practice most faithfully in the Girls' High School.

"Though he found it harder and harder to keep these theories in his class-room practice, since they exacted 'a mental effort to which the pupils of today are averse', he did not become a back number. 'You will say I do not keep up with the procession. But I confess I have the conceit that it is quite as likely the procession does not keep up with me'; and there was nothing of importance written in the language of any of the five great educating peoples that escaped him. 'A Latin and Greek student for more than fifty years,' he said in 1902, 'I cleave to the school of the humanists and remain loyal to the humanities. As a force in the spiritual activity of today the old humanism has lost its hold on men. To young and old, to wise and simple, everything comes through the native speech. Humanists always,—ever consciously aiming at the good, the true, and the beautiful,—we shall do well to take as the name of our pedagogic cult, the New Humanism.' And in this faith our New England Petrarch died."

Following the death of Mrs. Thurber, which occurred in the fall of 1907, old age came on with

rapid strides, and for the first time in fifty years school began to drag. In June, 1909, he resigned his position in the Girls' High School. For three years and a half he lived quietly and happily with his unmarried daughter in Roxbury, reading widely in German and French, in history and in English fiction of country life. More and more his books now found their way to the Boston Public Library, where for a generation he had been an almost daily visitor in Bates Hall. Indeed, the last letter that came to him before his death was an acknowledgment by Mr. Wadlin of the receipt of his copy of Hauptman's *Atlantis*.

Like so many old people, he now began to live over his youth,—a youth of pleasant memories and few regrets. Now, too, the poetry which he had committed to memory in his early manhood came back to him, and in his strong, musical voice he repeated passage after passage, and poem after poem, of Shakespeare and Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. He never spoke of death with fear or doubt; he spoke of life rather, and always with good cheer and sweet satisfaction. He died without illness or suffering on the morning of January 13, 1913, among the books of his library where he had spent so many long and happy hours. On the table by his side lay a volume which but a few days before he had finished reading,—Mary Antin's "The Promised Land."

Broad, sound scholarship; enthusiastic appreciation of the best in literature; a vigorous English style; stimulating, earnest leadership; a high sense of the dignity of his profession; untiring devotion to his work; unfailing sympathy with boys and girls;

above all, noble aspirations and high ideals,—these made Samuel Thurber one of the most honored teachers,—in the truest sense of the word one of the foremost educators,—of our time.

SELECTIONS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PAPERS AND ESSAYS OF SAMUEL THURBER

For twenty years Samuel Thurber appeared almost annually on the platform at teachers' conventions. Still more frequently he wrote for the educational periodicals vigorous expositions of his theories of English teaching. Some of these theories which he put into successful practice in his classes at the Girls' High School, were: the futility of marks and examinations in English; the folly of a special teacher of composition; the value of oral reading and memorized selections in the interpretation of literature; the importance of the teacher's personality in secondary education; the laboratory method of literary research, and the dangers of annotated texts; the broadening of high school courses of study to meet the needs of all the pupils of the community; the necessity of co-operation of all teachers in a school to improve the character of the written English; the absurdity of substituting theories of pedagogy for knowledge and appreciation of literature; the futility of manuals of rhetoric in teaching composition; the value of English as an indication of the tone of a school; the study of poetry as a means of cultivating high moral and æsthetic ideals.

In no way can Mr. Thurber's independent, suggestive, and radical views, or his felicitous and

epigrammatic style, be better illustrated than by copious selections from his papers and published essays.

PERSONALITY IN TEACHING

In teaching and preaching nothing interests but the interesting person. Title, authority, knowledge, all yield to the mystery of what we call the magnetic force of heartiness, sympathy, devotion. We are always making the mistake of thinking that administering, organizing, supervising is the great issue of educational ambition. Only he or she who comes into contact with the pupils can possibly teach. Personality must meet personality.

An Address to High School Assistants, "Education," October, 1900.

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The truth is, every new teacher comes on the stage to begin the work all afresh. She may have observed here and there in schools, and may try to live up to this or that exhortation she has listened to. But this cannot last long; her personality asserts itself more and more, and her teaching improves in proportion as her personality is good and strong, and succeeds in freeing itself from the encumbering self-consciousness that has been waked by injudicious professional indoctrinating.

Ibid.

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Equally unreasonable is it to talk about teaching as an art having ascertained and established rules. An educational art would be an organized system of rules of procedure, setting forth methods for all teachers to follow and devices serviceable in the effort to put the methods into practice. But you see at once that there is no objective art of education. We cannot find it in any manual or treatise. You never think of consulting a book in your perplexities. No provision can possibly be made for the individual's difficulties. You must make your own methods with your own wits. Your methods are personal to yourself. The art of education exists nowhere but in the personalities of the teachers. The teacher is the artist and the art.

Ibid.

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A superintendent who is a pedant of method tends to view the corps of teachers as corps of clerks, keeping books by

rule and prescription. The wise superintendent looks to see if you know how to solicit nature; if you have a personality assuring to children; if you are affable, communicative, and communicable; if you are repressive or if you are coaxing, eliciting, encouraging, stimulating. All you will ever accomplish in the teaching of English you will accomplish as a person, having such and such happy endowments, endowments of voice, of literary appreciation, of naturalness in expression, of sweet superiority to Mrs. Grundy and the sneers of a carping conventional world.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Education," May, 1898.

THE BROADER VIEW OF THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

The public high school has very happily been characterized as the people's college. The expression is of course metaphorical: a college, analogous to the institutions which from old have borne this name, the high school can never be; though it is quite thinkable that large cities may establish genuine colleges, and find them most useful parts of their educational systems. The high school is, or should be, a people's college in the sense that it should recognize itself as the last stage of the education under teachers which the vast majority of its graduates are to enjoy; in the sense that it should welcome to its advantages as students those who are beginning to feel the pressure of the demands of independent life; in the sense that it should strive to enlarge to the utmost that grateful constituency which looks back with civic pride, as to a genuine Alma Mater, to the public school that met its first intellectual impulses with quickening stimulus, that taught it how to spend leisure with profit, and so to live in society happy and contented.

To be the people's college, the high school must not prescribe to the people what the people shall study. That which the people want the school must furnish.

Election of Studies in Secondary Schools, "Educational Review," May, 1898.

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The fact that we are an industrial community implies that we have a great population of persons whose work and whose leisure are both regular. Granting that work is constant, leisure is no less so. Charity has always been concerned to provide work for the unemployed. But we are now coming to recognize that while work is the man's main interest, because his livelihood depends on that,—to the man as a moral and intellectual being, to the man as a citizen in a free state,

the way in which he spends his leisure is the all-important question. To be a safe, a trustworthy citizen, the man must know what to do with his evenings,—he must have intellectual resources. He must not only know how to read,—he must relish good reading; he must respond to the stimulus of a lecture; to his life of toil he must add a life of ideas; his leisure must not be to him a tedious blank.

Ibid.

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The high schools are very thorough, very systematic, and very regular: it cannot be said that they are not rigid, unaccommodating, regardless of the interests of large classes in the community. It cannot be said that the high schools are fully alive to their opportunities for doing good. To articulate the high schools more closely with the colleges will do the community no direct good. To make all high school schemes of work identical with the courses that prepare for college entrance examinations will do the community no good. These are petty ambitions. The high schools have relations with the colleges quite sufficiently close. But between the high schools and the community at large the gap is wide. The true agitation for high schools to engage in is the search for ways and means to bring into closer contact the high school and the people who most need education. Such a movement is commending itself to many educational thinkers, and is far from hopeless.

Ibid.

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We must abandon the fancy that the persons who have studied Latin will naturally become the leaders in social and civil life. We are finding out that the great substratum, which we absolutely must care for, or contemplate civil disaster, has no use whatever for prominence in literature and science, in politics, in elegant society. It is becoming plain that the state must, with its best influences, reach down to its lowest elements. The many see the few chosen to receive special favors at the hands of the public. Here is an anomaly to which we cannot shut our eyes. The many accept the primary education at the hands of the public: but only the well-to-do few can think of the high school courses.

Ibid.

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Were there no education except that which is intended to fit for college, I should despair of seeing any immediate improvement in our English teaching. My hope is in the primary schools and in the high schools proper, which are

freer to consult real needs and to adapt procedures to real conditions. The high school is the people's college. It should be a school of the humanities in the best sense. Its goal should be to discover wherein lies the secret of a true modern humanism.

The essential humanism of today has cut loose from the ancient languages. Its peculiar home and nursery is in the mother tongue and the native literature. To bring the youth into relation with the recorded thoughts and emotions of his own race is to humanize and to civilize him.

The Next Steps in the Teaching of English, "Journal of Pedagogy,"
May, 1896.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

Of all the subjects taught in the schools none is so central to the pupil's nature, none so absolutely and surely indicative of the amount and the kind of his intellectual attainments, of his tastes, his sum of culture, his social position, his inherited or acquired faculty, as his English. Hear a young person speak, or read his letter to you, and you judge at once where he was brought up, but can form no opinion as to where he goes to school. You instinctively reckon his speech as a part of his breeding, not as a part of his knowledge. Gentle manners have their perfect index in the timbre, the modulations of the voice, in the courteous and correct form of the written note.

Responsibility of the Elementary Schools for High School English,
"Journal of Pedagogy," December, 1895.

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And here again I must insist that as English is being used all the time, and there is no exercise that is not an English exercise, every single recitation of every teacher must be regarded as consisting of acts of expression, and no utterance and no writing shall be acceptable that does not observe the proprieties of speech. It is utterly futile for one teacher to be exacting in this regard while the rest are languid or filled with skepticism.

Idem.

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It is impossible to prescribe for atrophied English. Your English is as good as your school, and if your English is unsatisfactory, it is because your school is unsatisfactory. You

might as well try to cover up an annoying cutaneous eruption by painting your face as to try to improve your school English by more vigorous teaching of rhetoric and composition.

Idem.

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English is almost the one study in our schools that has the right to hope for continuance beyond the years of school into the leisure of later life. I do not hesitate to say that in the study of our literature we are to find our chief reliance for a bond that shall unite the heterogeneous elements of our people in a national consciousness. Adherents of all churches, members of all parties, dwellers in all corners of our vast territory, read the same books: their thoughts are led in the same direction; and this direction coincides with Saxon race traditions that link us to an immense past and warrant our hope of a great future.

English Literature in the Schools, "The Academy," December, 1891.

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Good composition is not to be learned like an assigned lesson that is studied and brought to the recitation. Good composition is a habit, a growth, an accumulation of received and assimilated influences; an unconscious possession, not to be forgotten like things committed to memory. As we think of habits of neatness, habits of truth-telling, habits of courtesy, habits of punctuality, habits of reading, so we think of habits of speech; but we do not think of habits of arithmetic, or habits of history, or habits of Latin.

*An Address to Teachers of English, "Journal of Pedagogy,"
December, 1896.*

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The pupil's English is to be cared for by nursing it from the beginning and watching it unceasingly; and no teacher is to be exempt from the duty of caring for expression; no teacher is to be burdened with the whole of this special function. Composition, oral and written, is inevitably practiced every day, in the usual processes of instruction. Modern high school methods involve endless writing. All this composition should be supervised and corrected, and all teachers should acknowledge responsibility for this paramount duty. A high school principal can in no way so well show powers of leadership as in inspiring all the teachers of his school with an English zeal. Just in proportion as he does this will the

English of his school improve; for no onslaught which the teachers of a school, supported by public sentiment, make in hearty unison upon an evil, howsoever intrenched, can possibly fail of success.

Idem.

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Give yourself no more compositions to read than you can read day by day, and do not devote your evenings to the work. Learn the sorts of faults that your pupils make, and sometimes speak of these faults if the pupils are old enough to care to listen to you. See individuals by themselves, and make sure that each is anxious to win your praise. You may praise very young children without making them conceited; and if you praise as often as possible, you provide yourself with a most formidable weapon of censure in simple abstinence from praise when it is not deserved.

It is of no use to correct young children's work in detail. Leave it childish, boyish, girlish. Why should not the boy or the girl be allowed to write in the boyish or girlish way, as well as to speak in the boyish or girlish way? The pedant corrects young composition into mature forms, a ridiculous and useless labor.

For precocious conventionality in style I have no praise. Be chary of correction. By correcting too much you may easily check spontaneity; and spontaneity in the child is to the teacher of English precious above all things else.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Education," May, 1891.

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The listening audience was contemplated from the outset. The writer must not be cheated of his reward, the plaudits of his mates. The anticipation of this public appearance on the platform has spurred him on to do his best, to cull his English, to find piquant things in books, in nature, in history, that shall rivet attention, and, for his ten minutes, make him monarch of the swelling scene. Every good composition, good because careful in its language and because it sets forth an original thought, must have the reward of publication in some form. It may be printed in the school paper; it may be read from the platform; it may be passed round the class for inspection, and lent to some pupil of dull ambition, who needs a stimulus, to take home for thoughtful examination.

Thoroughly pernicious is the notion that pupils must be made to compose something every day, for the sake of practice in composing. If you undertake this daily composition enterprise you must rake together all the pettinesses of current

life for your material; you must expect, at best, a wish-wash of trivialities; the stuff is too abundant to be read; it is too thin to interest anybody, even if it could be read. You do ill to set up the ideal of fluency as the goal of your composition teaching. The market is glutted with fluency, with highly colored descriptions of things not worth describing.

Five Axioms of Composition Teaching, "School Review,"

May, 1895.

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What I must say here is that the special teacher of composition should be abolished. He does no good, and he stands in the way. The reading of a certain limited amount of juvenile writing for purposes of correction is a pleasing task, leading to personal relations, to an appreciation of individual difficulties, to a possible giving of wise counsel. But the reading of juvenile writing in great quantities is inconsistent with mental and physical health. All the teachers of a school should share equally this task of supervising the English writing. I do not see how any teacher, man or woman, can have the effrontery to claim to know good English better than the rest; and I do not see how any teacher can submit to the drudgery of having several times his share of this work thrust upon him.

Idem.

THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

The danger is that we imitate the classical teachers and become mere pedagogic grinds in the elements of language and in one narrow round of authors and their works; that we cease to advance, as classical teachers have ceased to advance, and forget that our subject, unlike the ancient languages, is not peculiarly the property of school men, but has its own direct relations to life irrespective of its relations to pedagogy. In a literature that no longer grows, the teacher learns not to grow. In a literature that lives and enlarges, the teacher has every incentive to expand. The English teacher should be well read in his subject. He cannot begin by being well read, but he should constantly advance towards this goal. Wide knowledge of English literature is attained only with time well spent. This kind of knowledge is a slow accumulation and can be nothing else. The habit of unremitting reading is our first condition of growth.

Especially in English is it needful to warn young teachers against the evil effects of studying their subject in such books

as we give our pupils for school use, and which have come to be denominated *text-books*. The teacher remains in his nonage who gets his knowledge and opinions from such sources. Nothing will suffice the student but the originals themselves. Criticisms of writers, such as appear in manuals of literature, often poor in themselves, are worse than useless when taken instead of direct acquaintance with the writers. You cannot possibly know Shakespeare in any other way than by direct reading of Shakespeare's plays. And you cannot know Shakespeare well enough to conduct a class through two or three plays, without familiarity with many plays. You cannot teach literature by repeating things you have read about literature. You must be at home in the great authors.

English Literature in the Schools, "The Academy," December, 1891.

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But by far the larger portion of the reading of prose that young pupils will do will be cursory reading, not immediately under the supervision of the teacher. A good plan is to have a sufficient number of copies of some entertaining book to go round, and, when the book is being read by all, to have exercises of a conversational kind, in which each has an opportunity to ask and to answer questions. After a vacation each pupil can report what he has read: good choices can be praised; pupils who have read the same book can be set to questioning each other as to the story in any of its bearings. The recitation hours are too short and too few to allow the reading of extended stories in the class. But conversation that brings out the relish with which certain pupils have read something good inoculates the rest with desire to read the same thing; and what young people really desire to do, nothing will usually hinder them from doing. In these conversations the teacher will find his opportunity to show what constitutes a classic, like Robinson Crusoe, and what a merely interesting book, like Ben Hur. The occasions for instruction arise in abundance in such exercises. Pupils' tongues become loosened; they reveal their tastes; they open their minds to advice.

Idem.

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We are under great temptation to read modern books about old books, and to let such second-hand acquaintance serve us in lieu of familiarity with the old books themselves; or we attend lectures about standard authors whom we have never read,—a most enfeebling self-indulgence, characteristic of a lazy, superficial age,—

“An age that lectures, not creates,
Plastering our swallow-nests on the awful Past,
And twittering round the work of larger men
As we had builded what we but deface.”

The only proper business of a literary lecture to beginners is to spur them on to read the older, the basic, the classic literature in our language. Books that simply criticise and expound and imitate the productions of more original, creative periods are not the reading for us. For the best reading we must go back to those creative periods themselves, and there come into contact with the works which our age finds so much satisfaction in explaining and exploring.

*How to Choose Books for Interest and Profit, “The Academy,”
March, 1892.*

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There can be no profitable reading that is not interested reading: that is, to leave on the mind any impression of good, reading must be carried on with the willing co-operation of all the faculties. The mind can receive only when it is in a glad, receptive mood. Both body and mind are capable of doing task work; but there is no good reading which is task work. The reading that pupils do in school in the shape of assigned lessons is usually a violence to nature, and would remain barren of fruit, did not teachers laboriously enforce themselves to add to it some stimulus and piquancy; and even then it remains a wholly different genus of reading from that to which the same pupils resort for refreshment and recreation, perhaps in precisely the same authors. The great problem of practical education is how to make the learner learn with all his faculties; with heart and soul, as well as with intellect; with his emotional nature co-operating, instead of lying inert or resisting. The speech on this subject which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Tranio in the *Taming of the Shrew*, much as it has been quoted, will do to quote again:—

“Let’s be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray;
Music and poesy use to quicken you;
The mathematics and the metaphysics,
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you;
No profit grows where is no pleasure ta’en:
In brief, sir, study what you most affect.”

Idem.

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The teacher dwarfs himself who magnifies that peculiarly little thing,—the lesson book from which he assigns tasks to his pupils.

Let then the teacher of English be, first of all, a diligent reader of the best literature. This is the only way. Read Shakespeare unceasingly. Read something of Spenser and Bacon, and see if you do not become conscious of a call to dip a little into the other great Elizabethans. Read Milton's verse entire, and add some of his more famous prose pieces. Read Bunyan again and again.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Journal of Pedagogy,"
December, 1896.

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The wrong way to deal with English literature in school is simply to criticise and estimate it intellectually, to compare the merits of writers, to point out indications of foreign influence, and above all, to generalize and classify by periods, as the text books all do. Such procedures leave no pleasing impressions, even if they leave any impressions at all.

The Next Steps in the Teaching of English, "Journal of Pedagogy,"
May, 1896.

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Hence I say that the next step in our teaching of English is that we learn to realize the possibilities of literature as a means of reaching the emotions and the will. We must learn to deal with literature, not scientifically, but artistically; not as dissectors or analysts, but as artists, seeking to give expression with our voices to the essential content and meaning of literary masterpieces.

Idem.

DANGERS OF ANNOTATED TEXTS

In my experience as a teacher of literature, I find absolutely no occasion for using a text book of literary history or criticism. Nor do I find any editor's notes useful in my pupils' hands. You will please note that I say I find notes not useful in my *pupils' hands*. I do not say I do not find useful in my own studies such annotation as competent scholars have given us in their editions of the classics. Why admit this, that, or the other nobody to come into your class and speak for you? The pedantry of editing has grown of late silly and fatuous. I believe I do not speak as a cynic, but solely as a teacher. Given a text so thoroughly annotated that all its possibilities of questioning are settled and cleared at a glance, and I do not see what remains for me as a teacher except drearily to call next, next, while the class read the text in

recitation, except, of course, that even then I may correct elocution and pronunciation. I once recited rhetoric and history to professors who let me commit the books to memory and say them off. After me the next fellow took up the recitation, and so it went on. But that was in college and more than thirty years ago. I confess I am too nervous for such a monotonous procedure. The beauty of a question is that it provokes speculation and inquiry and elicits wrong answers, not that it matches certain recently gained information and is answered right. Stupidly right answers and stupidly wrong answers are precisely equal in value, and are equivalent to that other occasional phenomenon of stupidity known to the class room, the no answer at all. Intelligently wrong answers and intelligently right answers are also equal in value, though the intelligently wrong ones are usually the more interesting, because they set up targets for comment and show where the teacher's annotation is needed.

English Literature in Schools, "The Academy," December, 1891.

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Results without research are dead and useless. Research without results is excellent and vital, because accompanied with hope. Notes are usually a mere incubus upon interest. Those editors who steal from the teacher his opportunity of teaching are really his worst foes. Strange ideas of the pedagogic province seem to be held by annotators who try to tell the pupil everything, as if all the teacher had to do was to ask questions and get this told again — re-cited.

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You can hardly get young pupils to look upon the notes at the end of their books otherwise than as so much additional matter to be learned in the expectation that they will be questioned on it in recitation. The notes usually satisfy all curiosity before there is any curiosity to satisfy, and prevent curiosity from coming into existence. If a note would pique curiosity, which then it should leave me to satisfy, that would be delightful. My business as a teacher is to excite curiosity as the absolutely necessary condition antecedent to the giving of instruction. We are all supremely fond of inquisitive pupils.

The English Situation, "School Review," March, 1903.

ORAL READING

The notion that when the class hour comes you must begin to hear recitations, that you must talk and talk and talk,

and fret and fret and fret, and mark and mark and mark, is a hoary superstition. I pray you reform it altogether. Or you may let a boy or girl come to the platform and read something sound and worth listening to. But your main hold upon your class must be your own reading, which should be, really, good acting, full of expression, vital with energy. Do try to break up the primness of the girls: make them act, make them throw expression into their reading, teach them to be indifferent to the silly giggle and titter that naturalness excites in stupid, conventional people. I have a standing offer of a valuable prize to any girl who shall out-Herod Herod and o'erdo Termagant.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Education," May, 1898.

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But the teacher who has a pleasant voice and can read effectively has an immense advantage. In truth, I esteem a good voice and ability to modulate this voice in accordance with the character of various pieces of literature as the chief qualification of an English teacher.

Idem.

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I do not know that in the English Situation today there is any fact more notable or more lamentable than the utter decay of expressive reading . . . Pupils are no longer interested in the way English sounds . . . As railway examiners find men who are color blind, so I find girls in plenty who are inflection-deaf . . . They try to get off from my instructional processes by reading *Comus* and *Hamlet* as so much arithmetic, leveling it all down with the sad-irons of their comfortable, lazy habits, to a mere enunciation of the words.

The English Situation, "School Review," March, 1903.

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I insist therefore, that the first step towards the renovation of our school English, which the colleges still keep pronouncing extremely bad, must be the revival of the almost lost art of reading aloud pieces of elevated imaginative literature.

"Journal of Pedagogy," December, 1895.

EXAMINATIONS

To break up, in the coming generation of women teachers, the habit of hard, prosaic, meter-denying reading of poetry, is a great function of the higher teaching of literature. And the

means by which we are to fulfil this function is chiefly the study of metric forms. The wrong way to proceed with this subject is to get a text-book and learn some lessons and then have an examination. Everything natural and spontaneous dies under the upas tree of the text-book and the examination.

English Literature in Girls' Education, "School Review,"

June, 1894.

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I know very well how unwilling teachers are even to try to conceive an education without examinations. But examinations are a modern innovation, and education is an ancient art. Once upon a time examinations came up and so, some happy day, they may go down. I find my girls do best when relieved of all prospect of examination. All-important in education is the motive with which students work. Simply to spur them to work hard is a coarse method that can have in view only the overcoming of indolence.

Idem.

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No examination gets down to the substratum of the spiritual nature where the personality hides its gains. The examination is the most superficial and external ritual.

An Address to High School Assistants, "Education," October, 1900.

THE FUTILITY OF MANUALS OF RHETORIC IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH

Manuals of exercises in language, that tell no story, and respond to no native curiosity, are worse than useless, because they try to make language interesting as a thing in itself, regardless of its meaning. This is a pre-eminent pedagogical vice. The teaching which results in making the youth prematurely conscious of his speech defeats its own ends. Such teaching is solicited by no principle of psychology. It is an outgrowth of that curious propensity of school men which seeks to put all school subjects through the same mill. These men seem to think that they can teach language in portions, and that when all the portions are taught, all is taught.

Main Principles of English Teaching.

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The manuals of composition have naturally multiplied, because they were exceedingly easy to make, and we, being

teachers, and possessing but very scant power of initiative, have gone on professing to find them indispensable. But I wish to say most seriously that the use of such text-books has been, and still is, a hindrance to the acquisition of speech habits. Only that act of speech relates itself to our minds, in any vital or habit-forming manner, which starts from the thought and then proceeds honestly to convey the load with which it was freighted by the speaker's very self.

"*Journal of Pedagogy*," December, 1895.

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Good English is courtesy, it is dignity of character, so established that it cannot be frittered away among the low associations of coarse revelry or the slang of the athletic field. You cannot imagine a Ruskin tracing his command of English to a text book of exercises. Ruskin was thankful that his mother had required him to learn by heart long passages of Scripture. This is intelligible. Find me a great writer who will confess his indebtedness to a book of rhetoric. Find me a writer on rhetoric who is a great writer, or even a specially clear, forcible, or elegant writer. We must do our best to create for our pupils some semblance, though it be but distant and shadowy, of the conditions in which Ruskin learned his English as a child by the side of his mother. This means we must, with our English, with the associations of our English in literature and folk-lore, get deeper than we do into the children's souls.

Idem.

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I cannot think of beginning the work of devising a composition topic by laying down the rhetorical form which it is to take. From my point of view this prescription of a rhetorical form clouds, confuses, deranges the processes of composition. You cannot adopt a rhetorical category for your point of departure, and about it, as a secondary affair, contrive to build up the thought you have to express, unless you do it as a *tour de force*, as you would screw out of your inventiveness a nonsense-rhyme. I should hope a girl could, if there should arise occasion for so doing, distinguish the act of narrating from the act of describing. It is a very simple business, and as useless as it is simple. The true aim of the teacher is to get some good narration and description, to guide and stimulate the qualities and states of mind favorable to such achievements.

If there is ever a time in education when speech is to be analyzed under the rubrics of rhetoric, that time is surely

not in youth, when the school is insisting on numerous responsibilities of lesson-learning, and overwhelming young minds with a multiplicity of impressions. Formal rhetoric is a subject that should be postponed to the years of self determination, when the man may take it or leave it, as he likes.

Leaflet No. 34, "New England Association of Teachers of English."

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There are multitudes of books about the various departments of English study which have in view readers of small attainment and small courage, and whose effect on such readers is to beget in them habits of intellectual dependence. The mass of school-books with which teachers have to deal is narrowing in its effect on the mind. Most of these books need not have been produced at all. To people who do not frequent good society manuals of etiquette are all important. To some, perhaps, they even take the place of good society. What more dreary fate than to be doomed to perpetual reading of rhetorics, histories of literature, manuals of composition!

Suggestions of English Study for Secondary Teachers of English,
"The Academy," January, 1891.

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The habit of seeing in all English something to criticize and object to is a very different thing, which I utterly deprecate as one of the inevitable dangers of the study of rhetoric. What I recommend is the habit of imitation, and not the habit of censure. You remember how Franklin in his youth proceeded to train his power of expression. Given a mental content,—a thought capable of communication,—and familiarity with usage obtained by intercourse with men, and especially by reading, and the conditions are all present for successful writing. A memory stored with rules will be a hindrance rather than a help. Hence I insist,—keep the rhetorical text book far away; but keep the learner's eye ever fixed on actual prose English, all the while that his pen is exercising itself in the production of such English as shall suitably convey his young thought. He who writes will read with an eye sharpened to see the things he wants to know; he who reads will write with a pen predestined to move in the paths of correct, conventional speech.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Journal of Pedagogy,"
December, 1896.

MISCELLANEOUS

Children are docile and complaisant, and learn what we give them to learn. They learn even what they cannot learn. If this was sometime a paradox, the English teaching of today gives it proof. What good children cannot learn really, that is, cannot understand, cannot assimilate, cannot absorb, they nevertheless learn histrionically, that is, as actors conning their parts, to enact these parts on the stage of the recitation room. Learning rules, formulas, and stories by heart is mere acting. The little mimes seem to be learning their language lessons, to be giving proof of their acquisitions. So long as they please you, they are themselves pleased; and if they please you by reciting glibly things they have learned to repeat, you may keep school, but you are no teacher. What we call the poor scholar is oftentimes only a poor actor, afflicted by nature with an unconquerable bias towards reality, incompetent by the laws of his being to play in our farce, to dally with forms that yield to him no content.

An Address to English Teachers, "Education," May, 1898.

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The teacher who has a cultivated poetic imagination will not fail to perceive the supreme importance of the fact that only the isolated personality of the pupil is the teachable entity. Each boy or girl must learn with his own single mind, and must will with his own single will. There is no gregarious teaching. As a physical fact, of course, the class is multitudinous. But you will note that while the individuals of the class play in concert or move in unison, each stands absolutely alone, and is taught only if you teach him. The solitariness of the individual is inviolable.

An Address to High School Assistants, "Education," October, 1900.

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There is no education for you to study in the privacy of your home. If you give your evenings to solemn reading of pedagogy you find at last no residuum in your mind but big words: an extraneous acquisition of English which you soon forget because you have no recurring occasions to use it, unless, indeed, you are an educational lecturer, in which case this monstrous English will constitute the very staple of your stock in trade.

Idem.

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The child gets his language solely by imbibing it from his environment; if there is no audible speech in his environ-

ment he imbibes no speech. But he does not imbibe every word he hears; his curiosity does not extend to everything he comes in contact with. Only the things that appeal to him, that interest and please him, or perhaps terrify him, sink into his nature. Nothing else can possibly get into his soul. One of the most astonishing facts about human life is the power we all have to shed the rain of wisdom, which falls upon us and we do not take it in. The youth protects himself against that overplus of systematic knowledge which we thrust upon his attention by simply remaining impervious to it. We call him dull; but nature knows what she is doing.

Five Axioms of Composition Teaching, "The School Review."

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When you first take a play of Shakespeare in hand, you soon begin to have the feeling that you have read this before, though you know you have not. The fact is, the race is indoctrinated in Shakespeare. Shakespeare has expressed the general mind in phrases so pregnant with meaning, so full of insight, so happy in metaphor, that the race has had to adopt them as its own and add them to its stock of possible means of expression. Religious people, unless they are careful students, hardly know what ones of their religious conceptions they owe to the Bible and what ones to Milton and other writers. In short, our ways of thinking and speaking are largely determined for us by those who expressed in speech the thoughts of our ancestors.

*How to Choose Books for Interest and Profit, "The Academy,"
March, 1892.*

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Now this is a most worthy and an altogether commendable motive for reading. I most heartily believe in fiction, in stories, romances, fairy tales. Better read the most improbable and sensational story that has some degree of sustained interest and consecutiveness, than mull long evenings, and, still worse, long Sundays, over the characterless medley of unrelated bits that make up a modern newspaper. I know of no law or maxim of culture elastic enough to be made to approve the mental habit engendered by reading the multitudinous scraps of all sorts,—forced wit, low humor, information useless or useful, personalities, politics, and the rest,—which the press gives us every day in such astonishing quantity and at such astonishingly low prices. Even if absolutely all the separate bits and morsels that fill the newspaper columns were good and wholesome in themselves, yet their lack of unity would utterly condemn them as reading matter. Rapidly

passing from item to item, constantly focussing the inner eye to new distances, abandoning one impression before it is fairly made and trying to take another of an altogether different kind, the mind is dulled and calloused, and comes to lose its divine faculty of admiration and wonder. Do not dawdle long over the papers. Not till you are very old may you adopt the senile habit of dozing over heterogeneous paragraphs of reading matter.

Idem.

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Shakespeare stands at the head of English fiction. The fiction we all read, in prose or in verse, is an element of first importance to our lives as individuals and as members of society. English fiction has introduced us to a greater number of distinctly recognizable and familiar characters than have English and American history. There has probably been more written about Hamlet than about any Englishman or American that ever lived in the tide of times. It is a futile schoolmasterism to lament the tyranny of fiction. During adolescence chiefly, but also in later life, the human creature peoples his fancy with forms that continue to live with him as powers of good or evil. Education must take facts as they are. People will read fiction. Therefore we are to inure our youth to the fiction that is best and strongest.

Main Principles of English Teaching.

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Do not recommend merely to your class as a whole, but recommend to your pupils individually, fitting your advice to boys and to girls, to older and to younger children. A good plan is to ascertain what books the children call for the most, what books wear out the fastest. We must not be purists. Be independent; and if the censors of the public reading put Oliver Optic under the ban, consider whether your list is so large that you can afford to strike him out. Now and then some one expresses horror at the great preponderance of fiction our young people call for. I hope you do not share this misgiving. The first literature of the world was fiction, and the dominant literature of the race has always been fiction. Suppose your taste is so elevated that your favorite authors are Homer, Virgil, Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, Shakespeare: all is fiction. Do not worry because the children want their fiction.

An Address to Teachers of English, "Education," May, 1898.

Literature, remember, is the record of thought or emotion, expressed with such charm of rhythm, or with such felicity of phrase and such power of style, that it continues to awaken sympathy in following generations, and becomes a recognized national possession.

English Literature in Girls' Education, "School Review,"

June, 1894.

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I cannot see how it is possible to teach English except by coming into personal relation with the pupil, and I cannot see how this is to be done otherwise than by the eye, the voice, the tone, the humor. If you are a stanch partisan of a fore-ordained plan of work, and are seeking some term of mild opprobrium to fasten on me as a believer in spontaneity, you may call me an opportunist. I insist on utilizing the opportunity,—the precious chance.

The English Situation, "School Review," March, 1903.

POETIC TRUTH

AN ADDRESS TO SCHOOL GIRLS

This paper I prepared for a juvenile audience, namely, for the pupils of the Girls' High School, to whom I read it October 26, 1900, at a meeting in the school hall, to which they were invited by the members of the Samuel Eliot Memorial Association.

SAMUEL THURBER

Girls:

Miss Woods laid her commands upon me: that accounts for my being here in this novel position. Do not imagine that I should of my own motion dare to covet the honor of standing on this platform before this delightful audience. Then Miss Woods did not give me much time for preparation; and so I had no chance to prune my composition down to the just pattern of what I regard as a most exacting occasion. In deciding what I should say to you I had to think of the little girls, who smile so easily, and who would fain smile on the slightest provocation. These let me placate with a few lovely lines from Wordsworth:

“What more changeful than the sea?
But over his great tides
Fidelity presides;
And this light-hearted maiden constant is as he.”

For now, you little girls, you naif smilers, I have to confess to you, that in preparing something to say to all the classes, I have had chiefly in view those older pupils whose seriousness and whose willingness to think is the feature of our beloved school that has the best right to engage the affections and the sympathies of your teachers and your friends.

I am going to speak to you this morning on a subject that is infinitely interesting to me, and which it is my business in this school to try to render interesting to you. Now you wonder what this subject is to be: you are on the *qui vive*; your eyes are open, and all directed at me; your faces are wreathed with expectant smiles; you have lent me your ears; I have your attention. How can I keep this beautiful attention? I wish I knew. As a teacher I consider it the art of arts to

keep pupils curious, inquisitive, eager, expecting the next thing. Just now you are in suspense, and all is well. Soon, I suppose, I shall have to announce my subject and let you down. Then will come the tug of war: you will recognize a familiar old word, and those of you who know me will say to themselves, now for one of the old preachments. I take a genuine pleasure, which is by no means malicious, in thus teasing you. In fact I have a great mind to put off telling you my subject till I come to the end of my talk. Suppose I should not tell it at all, but just go on with my talk, and at last leave you to guess what it was all about. For some years I have not looked into a rhetoric, and so I do not know whether the text-books on speech-making recognize such a trick as a legitimate device for an orator to practice. Really, as I think of it, I believe I will let my subject dawn upon you gradually; and if this rhetorical artifice is not regular, why, I say, so much the worse for the rhetorics.

A witness in a court of law, you know, is put under oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If he departs from the letter of this oath, he commits perjury, a dreadful crime. The witness must tell the thing he saw or heard, the thing that actually happened. The truth he tells is the truth of fact. So also must the historian do to the best of his ability. And every scientific observer must watch his experiment and report exactly what he sees. The truth with which the witness, the historian, the observer are concerned is scientific truth.

But now consider the case of the novelist, who writes fiction; the case of the dramatist, who invents his plot; the case of the poet, who gives voice to human passions. In these cases, you perceive at once, we are no longer concerned with the truth of fact. The novelist and the poet tell of things that never happened: but just think what a mistake you make if you think that on that account the novelist and the poet are set free from obligation to any truth whatever. The writer of fiction works within a realm of law, which he is held most strictly to obey. His law is the truth of human nature. Humanity loves to see itself reflected as it is in its inner, spiritual essence; it loves to see its aspirations, its hopes, its longings to know the divine will, its griefs, its despair, its heroism, its loves, set forth in pictures. For humanity has always lived an ideal life, as well as an actual one. The inner life, that is, what we think and feel, is far more important to us than the outer life, which is what we do.

There are obviously these two lives which we all lead. We are full of hopes, desires, aspiration: these make the life of the imagination. We have to act in the family, in society, in the school: these actions make the social, the civil life.

So you see there are also two kinds of truth. There is truth-telling, which we call veracity, and the violation of which we stigmatize with that monstrous and ugly word, lie: and there is truth-desiring, or longing to know God's will, which in the language of the Old Testament we call righteousness, and which in the language of the New Testament we call love. The opposite of righteousness is sinfulness, or evil-mindedness: the opposite of love is emulation, rivalry, selfishness, contention. The lie may be detected and punished: but who can read the imaginations of a man's heart? "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face." "Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart."

The trappings and the suits of woe outwardly denote the mourner; but he has that within which passeth show: the real mourning is in the heart. In fact, it may be said that it is in the heart that everything real in human character dwells. Here is nothing conventional, nothing put on, nothing affected. If we could only look into each other's hearts! Fables innumerable have been made on this theme.

Into the heart of a man we cannot look; but into the heart of men, into the heart of the race, into the great heart of humanity, we can enter with perfect freedom and see with all clearness of vision whatever there resides. For all generations of men have bent themselves in most strenuous earnest to give expression to their imaginations, and what they could not actualize in deeds and institutions they put into verse and song, and verse, you know, outlives pyramids and Parthenons. The first men made verse long before they wrote history and chronicle. The poetry they composed is not veracious, it does not tell the facts as they happened, anybody can see that; but it is true because it pictures the lives and passions of prehistoric ages. It could not possibly be false to its theme, because it is national and popular, and if individual poets made it, these poets aimed, above everything, at producing verses which their countrymen could sing with keenest gusto, feeling their ambitions and their sorrows thereby exalted and intensified. If the early poet sang of miracles and marvels, remember he had a wondering public who delighted to hear of such things.

Consider that the people of the earliest times had no books; they were ignorant, as we judge ignorance: they could not read, they listened. Their poetry was sung to them by professional singers, whose words they caught and remembered. They listened in great crowds, so that vast numbers came to know the poems and were able to repeat them. When the singers of one generation passed away, the people still continued to sing the poems. Thus early poetry became truly

national, the first poet's name being perhaps forgotten, and the poems actually existing nowhere but in the hearts and memories of men and women. We may be sure that no poetry would thus live in the heart of a people if it were not true of that people's collective spiritual nature.

As much of this old poetry still remains to us, we, who live at the end of the nineteenth century, can thus look back over the poetry of a hundred generations of men. The art of singing it is lost. Beautiful and noble as we find it to be, we cannot commit great quantities of it to memory, as the ancients did, partly because we, as moderns, have now such an enormous mass of poetry demanding our attention, and partly because the arts of writing and printing have changed the public of listeners, receiving impressions through the ear, into a public of readers, receiving impressions in silence through the eye.

Just five hundred years ago yesterday died the great English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer's poetry circulated among the people as our poets' writings do, in books, only the books were all written out with the pen, as printing was not at that time invented. In Chaucer's day only an educated *elite* could read, and only a fairly well-to-do person could afford to own a book. Chaucer was very popular among the reading classes, because he painted for them most engaging pictures of the life about them, the life they all knew. The plots of his tales he invented or took from the common stock of folk-lore. You are accustomed to regard the plot of a story as being pretty much all there is of it, as being the story itself: but when a story is a genuine work of art, its plot becomes relatively of less importance than the other element of it, which is the color or atmosphere. A commonplace story has no color or atmosphere of its own at all: there is no magic about it. A Chaucer tale casts over us a spell, as Comus hurls his dazzling spells into the spongy air. In Chaucer we see the flowers of May, and inhale their fragrance, we listen to the singing of the little birds, we walk over the grass of the sweet English landscape, we make the acquaintance of a large society of most interesting men and women. The flowers, the birds, the people are in nature, and as Chaucer is true to nature, all these lovely things are in him too. A common poet could *say* flowers and birds, but he would not make us see them. The great poet imagines beautiful objects not merely existing by themselves, but existing as parts of large scenes: he sees nature with all its suggestions of emotion, or, as I may say, he hears not only actual sounds, but also the spiritual overtones which these sounds awaken from the chords of the human heart. Thus the true poet speaks to our inner nature and reproduces in us his own vision; and it

is by virtue of his power of thus communicating his vision that he, as a poet, is true.

I have tried to say that the purpose of a poet is to reflect our spiritual experiences; to give us pictures of our inner selves; "to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Just this is what Chaucer did, and then our literature waited two hundred years for one who in the same field should outdo Chaucer,—should outdo, in fact, all the poets of all modern literatures.

Just three hundred years ago Shakespeare was at about the midway point of his period of literary activity. What makes Shakespeare so great is his fidelity to nature,—his artistic truth. Of course, there is more in human nature than Shakespeare saw and pictured; but he saw and pictured more of it than any other extant writer. All constant readers of Shakespeare agree that his knowledge of human nature is unapproachable, his wisdom inexhaustible. He is to us a perpetual revelation of ourselves.

Now Shakespeare is great in many directions. Not only does he show to us many characters,—a plenty of other writers have done that, but wherever emotion expresses itself, he touches every phrase with a beauty of figure and rarity and selectness of diction that take hold of our sympathies and stir our blood. He melts us in his crucible: no one can resist his spiritual heat. To look into Shakespeare's phrase and figure is to make a great study of poetry.

Marcellus and Horatio are speaking of the disappearance of the ghost that they have seen.

Mar. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

Hor. So have I heard, and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:
Break we our watch up.

It is time for Romeo and Juliet to part, and Romeo makes as if he were about to go, but Juliet says:

Jul. Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;

Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

Rom. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale; look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Puck and Oberon are planning to restore to each other the true lovers, whom, with their love-juice, they have so dreadfully set at odds, and Puck says:

Puck My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

Ober. But we are spirits of another sort;
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

In such ways does Shakespeare, in such ways do all the great poets, write about the most familiar subject, the coming of morning. Of course no other way would do. Marcellus and Horatio, Puck and Oberon, Romeo and Juliet, are not actual persons, living at definite times in history, and having experiences of which a chronicler could take note. These people are universalized, and live forever. We must not say that Romeo said so and so, once on a time, and since then has been silent: Romeo goes on saying his say: he and his Juliet are the lovers of all time: we must always tell their story in the present tense. In fact all characters of fiction must be reported in the present tense, as all characters of history must be reported in the past tense.

Now why must Romeo say, when he means merely, *it is morning*,

“and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops”?

I once had a companion,—it was in my early youth,—who said he “could not see the use of poetry: if a man has anything

to tell us, why can he not say it downright, instead of going all about to pick up phrases?" There would be many answers to make to my skeptical friend. I wonder if there are any of you who are inclined to entertain similar doubts, and to query whether all this business of poetry is not a mere elaborate phrasing. Does Romeo's astonishing speech appear to you untrue to nature because it is so different from the way lovers talk in the multitudinous stories? Let us look into the matter.

The poet's concern is to make a picture which shall be true to life, true to human nature,—a picture which we shall not merely recognize as accurately presenting certain facts, but in which we shall at once take a profound and sympathetic interest. Romeo, in a poor story, would say, "It is morning; good-bye, Juliet"; and his case would affect us in a dull commonplace way. We should have no time, no incentive, no inspiration, to take his woeful plight into our imaginations and let it pass through and through our souls, causing our feelings to apprehend the situation. "Jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops": our sweet interview must end because day's garish eye, which would make sport of our love, which would blab our secret and set the cold world a laughing at our meeting, is straining his sight already to find us out; we must part: to stay is death. Just observe what a multitude of fancies and figures, linking the situation of his characters with nature and humanity, rushes into the poet's mind, and how, by giving these incidental fancies and figures expression in beautiful speech, he draws us along, transports us to Verona, to the palace of the old Capulet, to the orchard beneath the window, and makes us see the envious streaks of dawn in the east, makes us shudder lest Romeo be caught.

This is one of the great elements of Shakespeare's art. When he deals with a great human moment, he sees this moment in its infinite relation to external nature, as well as to the nature of man; he makes use of the hour, the season, the sun, the moon, the stars, the customs of society, the beliefs and superstitions of humanity, to vitalize his scenes, to multiply our points of contact with them, to make us forget the life of every day and live a little while in his world of exalted visions.

Then again we might reply to my skeptical friend, whose strange query has haunted all the years of my manhood like a stubborn, unlaidd ghost, that the dramatist must contrive to give to his language some sort of witchery, or people will not come to his theatre to see his play. This applies to all poets,—to lyric and meditative ones as well as to dramatists. As a writer of English, the poet must speak his speech with a difference. Hence it comes to pass that we have what we

know as poetic diction. Poetic diction differs from the diction of prose in using only choice, well-culled words, and in avoiding the language of common social and civil life. It may well seem to an untrained reader that the language of Shakespeare and Tennyson is turgid, labored, far-fetched. But the poets know best. Their words may well startle but not confound the mind trained to note poetic effects and to study the means by which these effects are produced. The case is this: in our newspaper, cheap-book lives, we use few words, and we use them over and over again. These words come at last to smack of commonplaceness, inevitably suggesting the narrow intellectual range for the needs of which they are adequate. We cannot help it. If we live in deadly prose, our very stock of words tends to keep us there. We cannot rise into an ideal range of thought and emotion with those words. So the poet, even though he has set forth a human moment that could be told in common speech, must nevertheless not employ common speech in presenting it for our interest. We are in a manner the prisoners of our words. All words have associations; and these associations are fully as important to us, as speakers, as are the meanings of the words. Think of the enormous difference in association between *raiment* and *clothes*. Each word brings its atmosphere. The deadly enemy of the poet is the sordid, the vulgar, the usual, the conventional. At all hazards he must have elevation, illumination, glory. Before his inner eye hovers an infinity of fancies suggested by his theme. From these he selects by his sure art those that are most fit for his purpose, and then he bodies fancies themselves. Let Shakespeare himself be our authority. No one knew better than he the psychology of poetic composition:

“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.”
And now hear Longfellow to the same effect:

“Thus the Seer,
With vision clear,
Sees forms appear and disappear,
In the perpetual round of strange,
Mysterious change
From birth to death, from death to birth,
From earth to heaven from heaven to earth;

Till glimpses more sublime
Of things unseen before
Unto his wondering eyes reveal
The universe, as an immeasurable wheel
Turning forevermore
In the rapid and rushing river of Time."

Longfellow, you observe, calls the poet a seer; and this is, in fact, just what he chiefly is. The poet sees, far more than we do, the inner relations, the mutual dependencies, the interactions and suggestions of things: and seeing all these fine shows, he proceeds, by his curious art, to build his poem, in order that we may see them too. How does the poet thus bridge the chasm between his subtle insight and our dullness? How does he, seeing, make us also partakers of his vision? We shall not really appreciate poetry until we begin to think about the matter a little, and try to discover some of the laws which govern poetic composition.

We have seen already that the first law under which the poet works is the law of truth: the poet must be true to human nature; he must give us the vision of his conscience, the vision of his aspiration, and not the vision of wantonness or baseness. Then we have seen that the poet must be one to whom visions are really vouchsafed; he must be an undoubted seer; he must thrill us with his own personality. Out of the infinite treasure of human imaginations he must bring forth things new and old, all illumined with his own light, so that we may know him as an individual, as Milton, or Cowper, or Keats, or Wordsworth; as a distinct character, whom no other is exactly like. Then again we have noted that the poet must be an artist in language, because poetic conceptions cannot be spoken in common speech. All great poetry is in the poetic language. For understanding this language you will find a certain training indispensable. The poets draw their vocabulary and phrase from the centuries preceding their own, and chiefly from the English Bible. Hence you must become familiar with some portion of our old literature if you propose to know the poets of our own generation. There is no other way. The common novel of situation and adventure requires no preparation; the reading of it exercises no faculties, and leaves you as little able or inclined, as it found you, to advance to higher things.

But now I must call your attention to a feature of genuine poetry different from any on which I have as yet touched,—to a feature which allies poetry and religion in an alliance so intimate as to justify the almost startling phrase of a recent profound thinker: "Religion is poetry believed in, just as the outward world is poetry believed in; and when poetry

is true, it is truer than anything beside. The conception of each is reached in the same way, and each demands a like faith." Of this saying of the philosopher I will try to give you a few explanations and illustrations, remembering that you are young, and that your beautiful patience must not be abused.

If you read the poems in any good book of selections, like the Blue Poetry Book, which we have for class use in Room 10, you will perceive that each piece has its main theme, its drift or purport, I might say its moral, its spiritual intention or endeavor; or again, I might use the homely word, its lesson; or yet again, I might use the French word its *motif*: but I will adopt the plain English word, motive. Elsewhere I have used the expression, human moments. The moment is the event, that which happens, or which the poet imagines as happening. The poet takes the human moment that suits his purpose, and makes of it a motive or the soul of his poem. The event, for example, is the deportation of the Acadians and Evangeline's long search for her lover: the motive in Longfellow's poem is constancy in love. Snow-Bound and the Cotter's Saturday Night, picturing different moments, have the same motive, namely domestic happiness, filial piety, religious faith, glorifying lives of poverty. The motive of a poem is often expressed in a couplet or a stanza, as in the Ancient Mariner,

"That self-same moment I could pray,
And from my neck so free,
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

You should accustom yourselves to seeing and trying to express the motives of poems, beginning with such as are simple and short. As you collect poetic motives, you will soon begin to perceive that these motives constitute a kind of high-bred and exclusive family, or caste, and that you are sure of good company while you stay with them. Examine a good many of them: they have a certain family likeness. You will find that a considerable number of poems, read at a sitting, make a consistent impression. Different as they may be in moment, or story, they have some great quality in common: they do not pull your mind in opposite directions and confuse your emotions; they work together, and the influence of each is a reinforcement to the influence of the rest. Now this great quality which belongs to poems by virtue of their being poetry we may name their ideality, or the homage which they invariably pay to the ideal.

Thus it comes to pass that a very large range of human interests is absolutely banned and barred from poetry. Poetry

loves aspiration, constancy, self-sacrifice. It cannot bear the sound or the touch or the gleam of money, unless when it undertakes to satirize selfishness. And yet how beautiful is the "sair-won penny-fee" which Jennie comes home to deposit to help her parents dear! Poetry loves poverty and hates wealth. Hence with regard to the accumulation of property, it is not the prudential maxims of Solomon, but the teachings of Christ that poetry adopts as its doctrine. Solomon brought a kingdom to great glory: he was the wisest of men. Christ's teaching struck a responsive chord in the human heart and regenerated mankind. The proverbs of self-interest have no ideality, no elation, no mystery requiring study and contemplation. Each generation estimates them at their full value and understands them absolutely and perfectly. The gospels remain the book of books,—the most written about, the most explored, the richest in meaning, the most potent to touch the conscience, the most abounding in revelation of the Divine will,—of all documents that have been communicated to humanity through the medium of the written word.

Poetry loves the ancient occupations of the race. Its very frequent symbols are the plough, the sickle, the distaff and wheel, the ship, the horse, the ox, the sheep, the sword, the spear, the arrow. In poetry ghosts still walk; fairies dance; buried treasures are found; and these things are true in poetry because the old superstitions have left their deposit in men's souls, and marvels are essential to our life. Scientific enlightenment, skepticism, pride in modern progress, the critical bias, are incompatible with poetry. Our bustling education creates an atmosphere in which it lives a sickly life and is manifestly losing its devotees. Fatal to all interest in poetry is the written examination, with its system of artificial emulations and its ignoble ambitions. All machinery that displaces the primeval customs tends to make the old poetry unintelligible. Fatal to the poetic spirit is all smartness, all pushing to the front, all grasping, all boasting over big things, all hasting to be rich.

Poetry loves the innocence of childhood. It prefers chimney-sweeps and boys who lie in wait to steal apples to boys who are very good and take pains with their neckties. The primal instincts, the old loves of husband and wife, of father and mother, of brothers and sisters, it is these that poetry seeks for its themes. Poetry has no affiliations with learning and scholarship, though ever on the watch for human moments on which to build new poems illustrating the old motives. Poetry loves a little mystery, plays around a theme with figure and allusion, challenging us to describe its exact aim: a little tantalizing is by no means bad. It is fond of riddles and oracular utterances; fond of unqualified exaggera-

tions: it does not hedge and apologize. The poet is amused, or vexed, to see people taking him literally. When Tennyson had published

“I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,”

people ran to him to ask who it was that so sang: evidently a much schooled and examined generation sought after a note. Everybody conceives himself writing a paper, and in terror lest he should be unable to answer a question. But the more notes, the less appreciation of poetry. Strange to say, Tennyson gave to his querists no consolation: he had in view no definite human being.

You must learn enough of poets and their ways not to be obliged to depend on notes. Just think what a silly thing it is, when a poet has done his best to set us thinking, to write him letters asking him to tell us what he meant!

Study Emerson: but you will never understand Emerson till you are willing to read the essays as well as the poems. Emerson is an entity all by himself, to be studied as a whole. His poems are the quintessence of the man, the last refined expression of him. Yet many of his poems are easy, within the reach of every girl in this audience. Let me give you one of his least: the allegory will flash upon your minds. It is the little piece entitled *Days*.

“Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb, like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single, in an endless file,
Bring diadems, and fagots, in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.”

Now the motive of this poem is far from great; in fact, it is commonplace: but consider what a solemn majesty it has by virtue of the sustained metaphor! And listen to the following solitary stanza, which commands our assent at once, and yet will bear a great deal of thought;

“The sense of the world is short,—
Long and various the report,—
To love and be beloved;

Men and gods have not outlearned it;
And how oft soe'er they've turned it
Not to be improved."

Here is no pretence of an event, a happening: it is a pure moralizing set in rhyme and graced with neat turns of thought and phrase, the doctrine of Jesus and of Paul, impressive because it goes right to our religious convictions. You should have your memory stored with such verses.

Even while I write this paper for your edification, and turn aside for a few moments to read in a book in which I am greatly interested, I come to the following passage: "In virtue of the close affinity, perhaps ultimate identity, of religion and poetry, preaching is essentially a lyrical expression of the Soul." The writer is James Martineau, one of the very greatest preachers and theologians of the nineteenth century. I quote him, as I have already quoted Professor Everett on the same theme, because I wanted the support of these men of note for what has long been my conviction, that poetry and religion are ultimately the same great human interest. Historically they occupy different fields; the one has a ritual, the other has none. On the one, men cannot agree, on the other, they cannot disagree. Simply from the law of their nature, a fact beyond which we cannot go, all men pay the same homage to the poetic motives, and all alike acknowledge the charm of verse. He who expresses the conscience, the aspiration, of the race will not fail of a hearing. The essentials of Christian theology are in the poetry of Christendom.

Now you see what an immense advantage I have as a lecturer over one who thinks he must obey the rules of rhetoric and draw up a plan of his work in advance. The writer of a carefully planned discourse has his frame to fill up: he must go on till he has rounded out his scheme; whereas I can stop when a bell rings, or when you begin to yawn, or when my voice grows tired, or when I just please of my own sweet will. You must know that the possible always *is*, whether it happens or not. And I might go on into the infinities of my theme, though this dreadful thing, I assure you, will not happen. I did want to enter the field of *poetic form*, and show you why poetry loves verse, explaining that things may be said in verse and rhyme and be most true, which would be absurd and false if spoken in the cold blood of prose. The imagination paints with its own colors, and while these colors must of course be composed of English words and sentences, it grinds them with ingredients all its own.

Thomas Hood, who, you know, sang the *Song of the Shirt* and the *Bridge of Sighs*, pieces of most moving pathos, re-

membered in middle life with affection the house in which he was born. When he tells us

"I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,"

you perceive at once, even if you do not see the verse-structure, from the beat and cadence of the rhythm, as the reader invariably gives it, that this is poetry. Your ear is taken; you make at once a kind of surrender. This rhythm has a sort of transforming power. The reader's voice strikes an unwonted key of mellowness, of sympathy. He cannot help it. Mr. Gradgrind would brush aside the whole thing, as containing no facts; and in a girls' school I fear the thought of Mrs. Grundy would tend to hold a reader in the grip of deadly commonplace. But the reader who forgets her own appearance and has the usual human sympathies, is dominated by the verse melody, falls into the verse-lilt, feels the recurring rhythm, and will bring out these poetic features in spite of syntax.

Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, most honored of Harvard professors, compiles his anthology, or collection of verse, in several volumes. He begins with these pieces: first are alphabet rhymes, a jingle, and then Mother Goose is drawn upon, and we have,—*I like little pussy, her coat is so warm; This little pig went to market; The cow that jumped over the moon; If all the world were apple-pie; Who killed Cock Robin? Hickory dickory, dock; The north-wind doth blow; Little Bo-peep; Sing a song of sixpence; Old Mother Hubbard; Little Red Riding Hood; Dame Wiggins of Lee and her seven wonderful cats; The history of Tom Thumb.* And so he goes on for ninety pages of choice child literature.

These pieces were sung or told to you in your babyhood. Please note that they have genuine lilt and sing-song, meaning enough for their audience of babies, and music in abundance, such as the baby appreciates. The infant is delighted with this rudimentary poetry because he is a human being. Somehow, perhaps from the heart-beats; perhaps from the balanced succession of steps with the right foot and left foot in walking; perhaps from the necessary twoness of all movement, as that every up must have its down, every to its from, every inhalation its exhalation; perhaps from the beat of the cradle-rockers, or from the swaying, dandling movement with which the mother stills the restless babe,—somehow, at any rate, the race of man associates the melting mood with rhythm, and poetry adopts rhythm as its normal and proper vehicle.

Verse means a turning, while prose means going straight forward: these are the meanings of the words in Latin, to which language they belong. We usually call the verse a

line. The line soon comes to an end, and must turn. Through the poetic line we march, or leap, or skip, or dance, but we do not walk. When we walk in speech, we keep on till we get to a destination; but the verse has a measure, and when we have stepped this off we must begin a new bar. The unit of form in poetry is the verse or the line. The end of the line is, rhythmically, a natural pausing-place, and you must not let the obvious syntax of sentences beguile you into running over line-ends as if they did not exist. To make the line-ends stand out prominently; to mark off the measure and make you sing in time even if you are thinking only of sentences and syntax; to break down your prose habit and force you a little into sing-song, the poets have invented the artifice of rhyme. The Christian poets of the early post-classic age added rhyme to their Latin verse, and with magnificent effect. Some of you know the movement of the Virgilian hexameter, most majestic of rhythms, and you will be interested to hear Latin dactylic hexameters going thus:

“Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus!

Ecce! minaciter imminet arbiter ille supremus.”

Thus begins the poem, by Bernard de Morlaix, on which a modern English scholar has made our *Jerusalem the Golden*.

In this tedious paper I have touched upon a few phases of our great central subject. I wonder if you know what it has been: but I am not going to tell you. You must guess. Let me say in closing that everybody studying literature or science finds out sooner or later everything he really wants to know: and, on the other hand, nobody studying for marks, for examinations, for a diploma, but having no curiosity of his own, learns anything whatever. We learn only when we are interested; and when we are interested, no subject of human knowledge is beyond our reach. Only that teaching succeeds which begins by implanting curiosity.

